Vol. 25 No. 1 Spring 2012

EAGLE Times

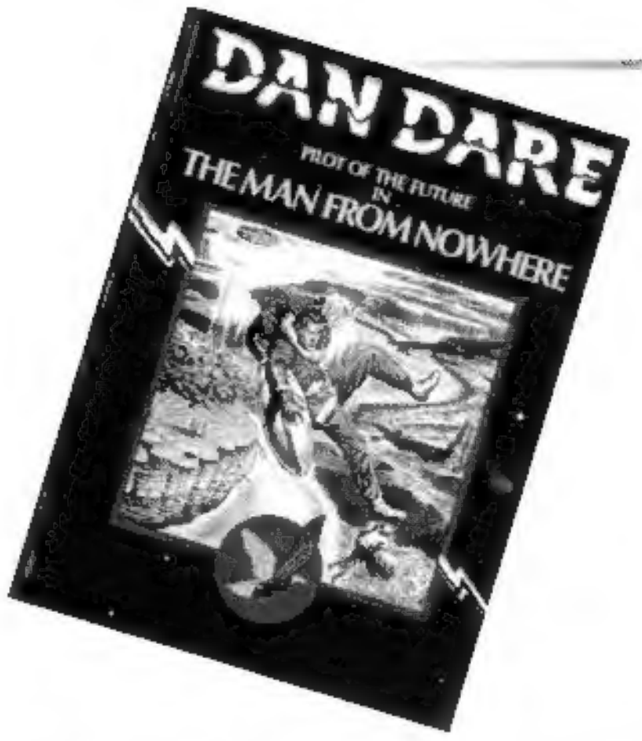
The Journal of the Eagle Society

REMEMBERING BRITAIN'S NATIONAL PICTURE STRIP WEEKLY - EAGLE, 1950 - 1969

Volume 25 No 1

Eagle Times Editorial Office
24 Stanfield Road
Duston
Northants NN5 6EZ

Tel/Fax: 01604 756200
E-Mail: howard.corn@virginmedia.com



The quarterly journal of the *Eagle Society*.

The *Society* is dedicated to the memory of Britain's National picture strip Weekly - ***EAGLE***.

Hello again,

This issue moves us into Volume 25 of ***Eagle Times****. Assuming we make it through the year, we shall have completed 25 years of continuous publication by 2013. Judging by the complimentary letters in the 'Postbag' section most of you, our subscribers, are happy. To all our Members and helpers go 'The Team''s grateful thanks for your continued support.*

Over the years several publishers have brought out Dan Dare and ***Eagle*** *reprints. IPC published a few, Dragon's Dream did, Hawk Books did us proud and, currently, Titan Books are reprinting the Dan Dare stories. For our lead story in this issue Alan Vince recalls how he met Roger Dean of Dragon's Dream and how those books came about.*

Our recent articles on Leslie Ashwell Wood have proved very popular, so we continue to look at his output with an in-depth look at the 'Inside Information' books he drew for Benwig after leaving ***Eagle****. Some of his much earlier pre-****Eagle*** *work, from the 1930s, is also looked at.*

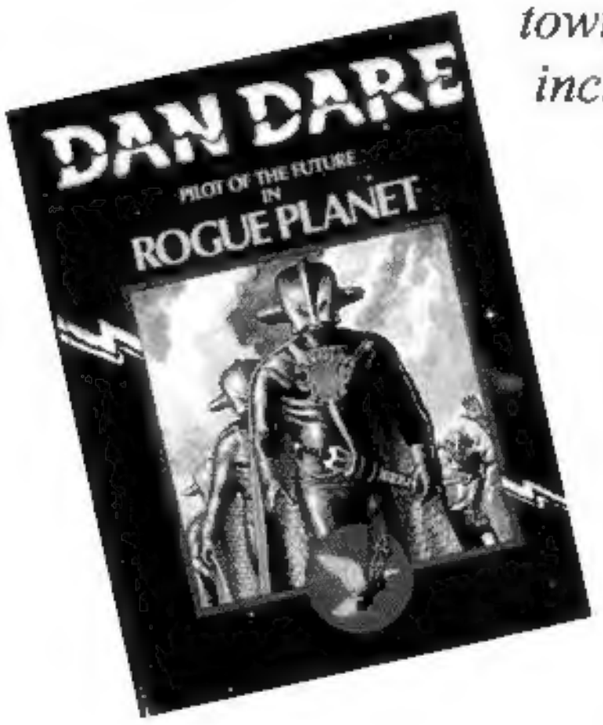
Another artist we don't much associate with cutaways is Bruce Cornwell, but he did draw a few and Jeremy Briggs recalls these.

Steve Winders continues his look at the sixties ***Eagle*** *with an appraisal of one of the last new stories to be published in 1969 – 'Sky Buccaneers', a frame from which was adapted for our front cover. Steve also provides us with the most unusual picture of "Dan" Dare which adorns our rear cover!*

Something we haven't featured recently is the Members' 'Who's Who'. The simple reason for this is that nobody has sent one in recently. So, don't be shy, if you haven't already featured sent us a potted biography of yourself and a suitable picture. Write about a hundred words about how you came to read ***Eagle*** *and any other information about yourself you would like other members to know about. We've only covered fifty members so far, so there are plenty more (over two hundred!) we know nothing about.*

Also feel free to send in any article you think other members may be interested in. We do like articles with some relevance to ***Eagle*** *but bear in mind that the magazine's name is* ***Eagle Times*** *so subjects that were current during the same time as* ***Eagle*** *was will also be considered. If you admire a comic that was around during the fifties or sixties, tell us about it.*

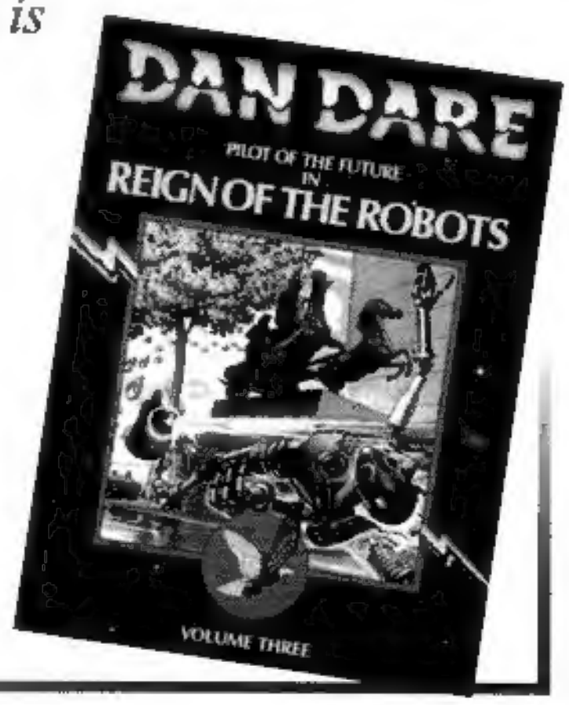
As advertised with the previous issue, our annual get-together this year is another visit to ***Eagle's*** *home – Southport. As we went to press some places were still available, so if you fancy an early trip to the seaside town send off your application to Adrian Perkins. An application is included in this issue's Supplement.*



Until the next issue,

Best Wishes,

'The Team'



EAGLE Times

Vol 25 No 1 Spring 2012

Production Team:

Editor in Chief:	**Howard Corn**
Pre-production Layout:	**Tony Cowley**
Sub Editor:	**David Gould**
Final Layouts & Cover:	**Will Grenham**
Membership Secretary:	**Keith Howard**
Social Secretary:	**Nigel McMurray**
Research:	**Adrian Perkins**

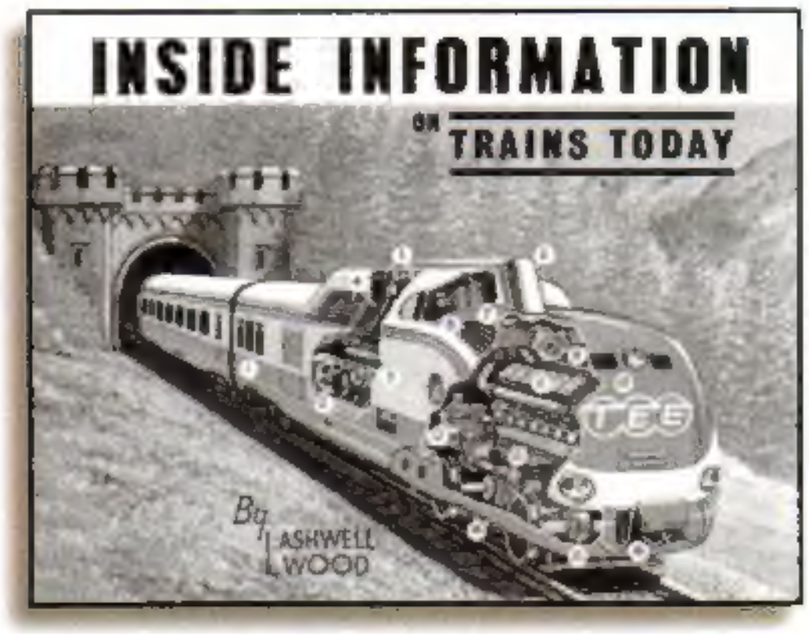
Annual Subscription*: U.K. £27, Overseas £38 (In £s Sterling please)
Subs. to: Keith Howard, 25A Station Rd. Harrow Middlesex HA1 2UA

CONTENTS

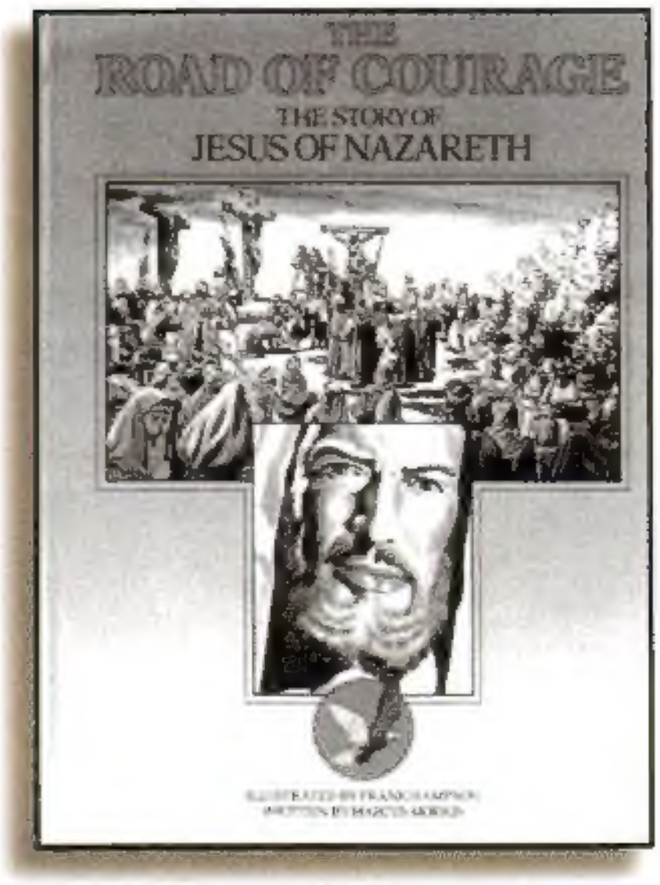
1. Editorial
2. The Roger Dean Experience
7. Inside Information by L. Ashwell Wood
11. Rye - Pugwash's Town
14. PC49 and the Case of the Missing Schoolboy
20. Eaglecon 80 - Visual memories, part 2
24. Only Digby - a Tribute to Geoff Provins
25. The Eagle Cutaways of A. Bruce Cornwell
30. A Look at Luck - part 3
36. Dan Dare Figures - part 2
40. Remembering The Ship That Lived
41. Leslie Wood in the 1930s
44. Classics Illustrated and The West
46. Sky Buccaneers
52. Postbag
53. An Eagle Wordsearch

Dan Dare and 'The Ship That Lived'

'The Missing Schoolboy'



Leslie Ashwell Wood

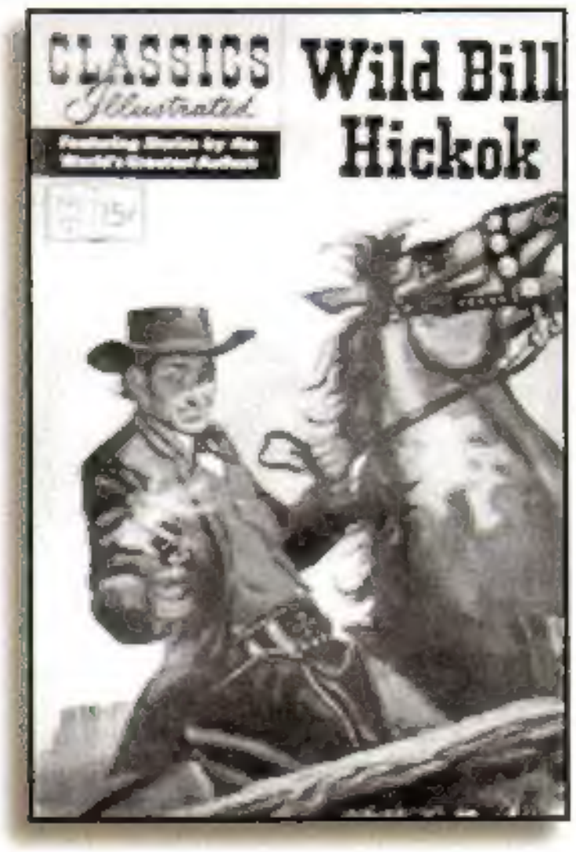


Dragon's Dream

The views expressed in *Eagle Times* are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the journal or its production team.

Original contents © *Eagle Times* and originators.

Any © material from the original *EAGLE* Magazine or elsewhere is reproduced from members' collections, for the purpose of historical and/or critical reference, not for commercial gain.



Captain Pugwash

Classics Illustrated, Wild West

Publication Dates

31st March, 30th June,
30th September, 14th December

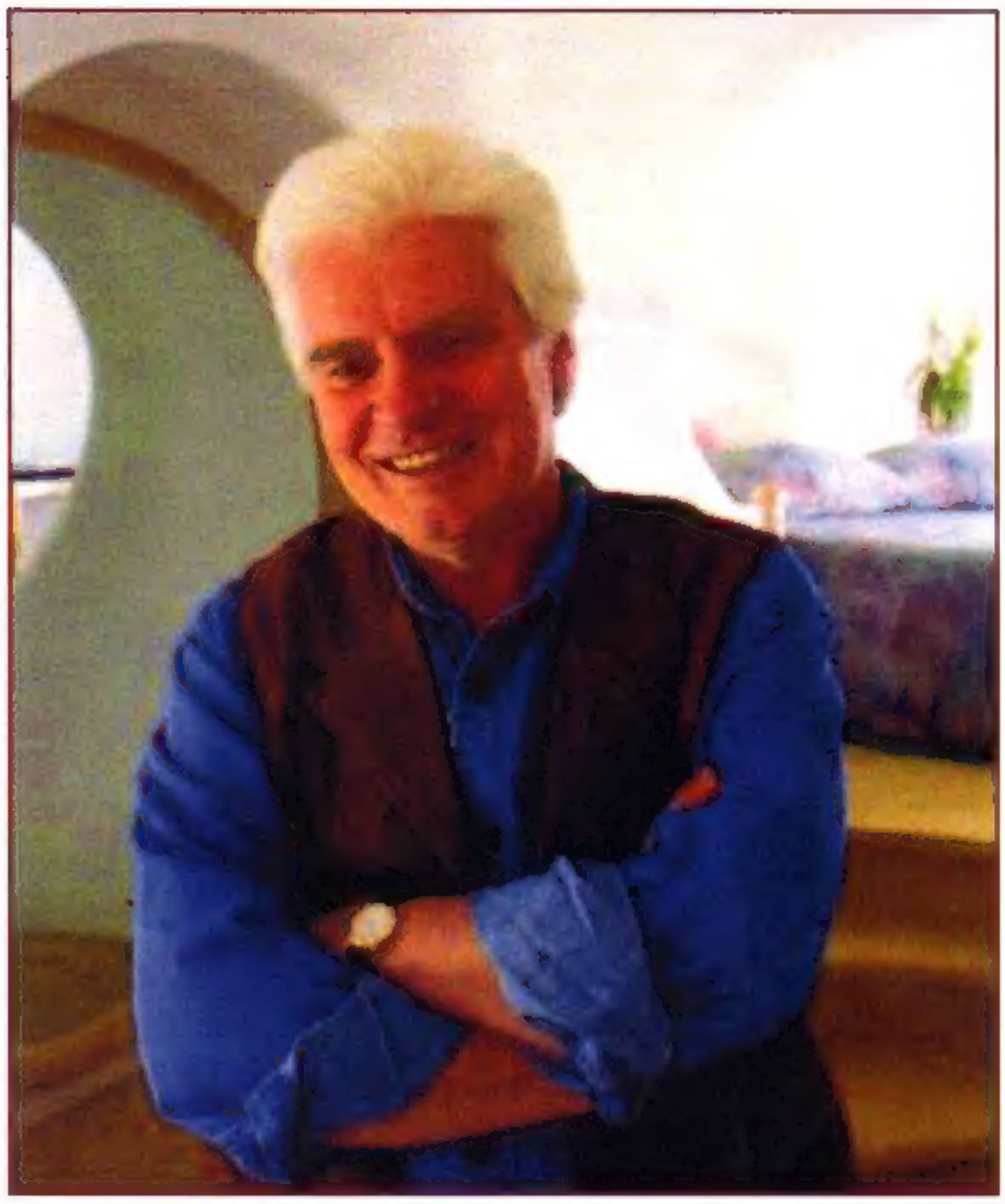
Eagle Times on the web:

http://eagle-times.blogspot.com/

* We can now accept a limited number of Subscription payments via PayPal, to the **eagle-times@hotmail.com** e-mail address, but if choosing this method of payment, **please add £1.50** to the above prices.

The Roger Dean Experience

by Alan Vince



Roger Dean

I have to admit, to my eternal shame, that Roger Dean's name meant little to me in the 1970s. His particular area of design and work was very far removed from my own background in art and popular music. Yet our paths were to cross thanks to good ol' Dan Dare, who seems to have been a permanent part of my life since I first saw a copy of *EAGLE* in 1950.

Not long after I met Roger I was interviewing a young lady for a junior studio post at the company where I worked as a freelancer. The owner (one of the biggest liars on earth) always left it up to me to assess possible employees. He could then blame me if they didn't work out! I noticed that some of her art college specimens were in the Roger Dean style. Roger was always generous with copies of his books and I suddenly became an expert on his trademark designs. I happened to mention to Jo (that was her name) that her work seemed influenced by Dean and that I knew him slightly. Now this lady and her soon-to-be husband were part-time members of the Salvation Army, and devout Christians, and her reaction was amazing. If I had told her that I had met Jesus himself she couldn't have been more impressed. It was then that I realised just what standing Roger had in the business. Later, when Jo left the studio to work full time for the Salvation Army, Roger gave her a signed copy of *The Road of Courage*.

Dragon's Dream logo

It was September 1977 that I received a two-page letter from Frank Hampson. In it he commented on my *Mayfair* article, told me about his work on the two Science Museum murals, the fact that he had left the college where he worked and how busy he was going to be preparing for his OU exam that October. Along with all this he added: "A man named Roger Dean has been in touch with me. Do you know him? He is young and has made a considerable reputation designing record sleeves etc."

Frank went on to say that Dean and his partners had bought the rights of 'Dan Dare' from IPC in order to produce books of the stories and that they had planned to begin with the trilogy 'The Man from Nowhere'/'Rogue Planet'/'Reign of the Robots'.

Frank had been asked to co-operate with a number of aspects in the production, such as writing a foreword, designing the covers and drawing new pictures to fill the areas left by the *EAGLE* logo. In the end, either pressure of work or ill-health meant Frank just did designs for the "fillers" which Don Harley completed. He also redrew the famous Venusian Embassy Ball front page, adding in extra details.

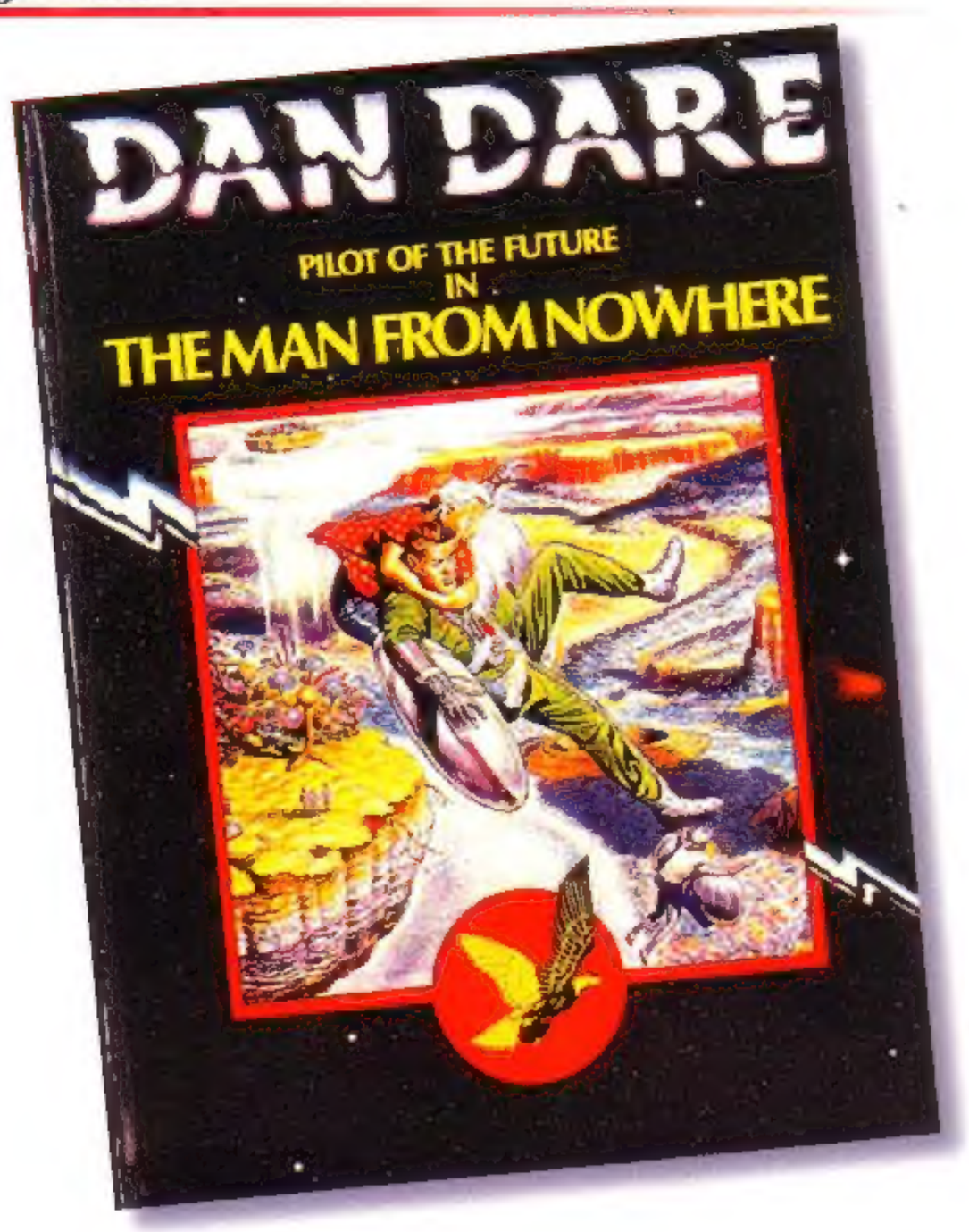
Roger was born in Ashford, Kent, in August 1944. His mother had studied fashion design at Canterbury School of Art before her marriage. His father was an engineer in the British Army and he took the option of going abroad, so most of Roger's childhood was spent in such places as Greece, Cyprus and Hong Kong. Roger has a brother, Martyn, and two sisters, Penny and Phillipa. The family returned to England in 1959 and Roger went to Ashford Grammar School. In 1961 he began a three-year course in the Industrial Design Department of Canterbury School of Art, which led him to get a National Diploma of Design.

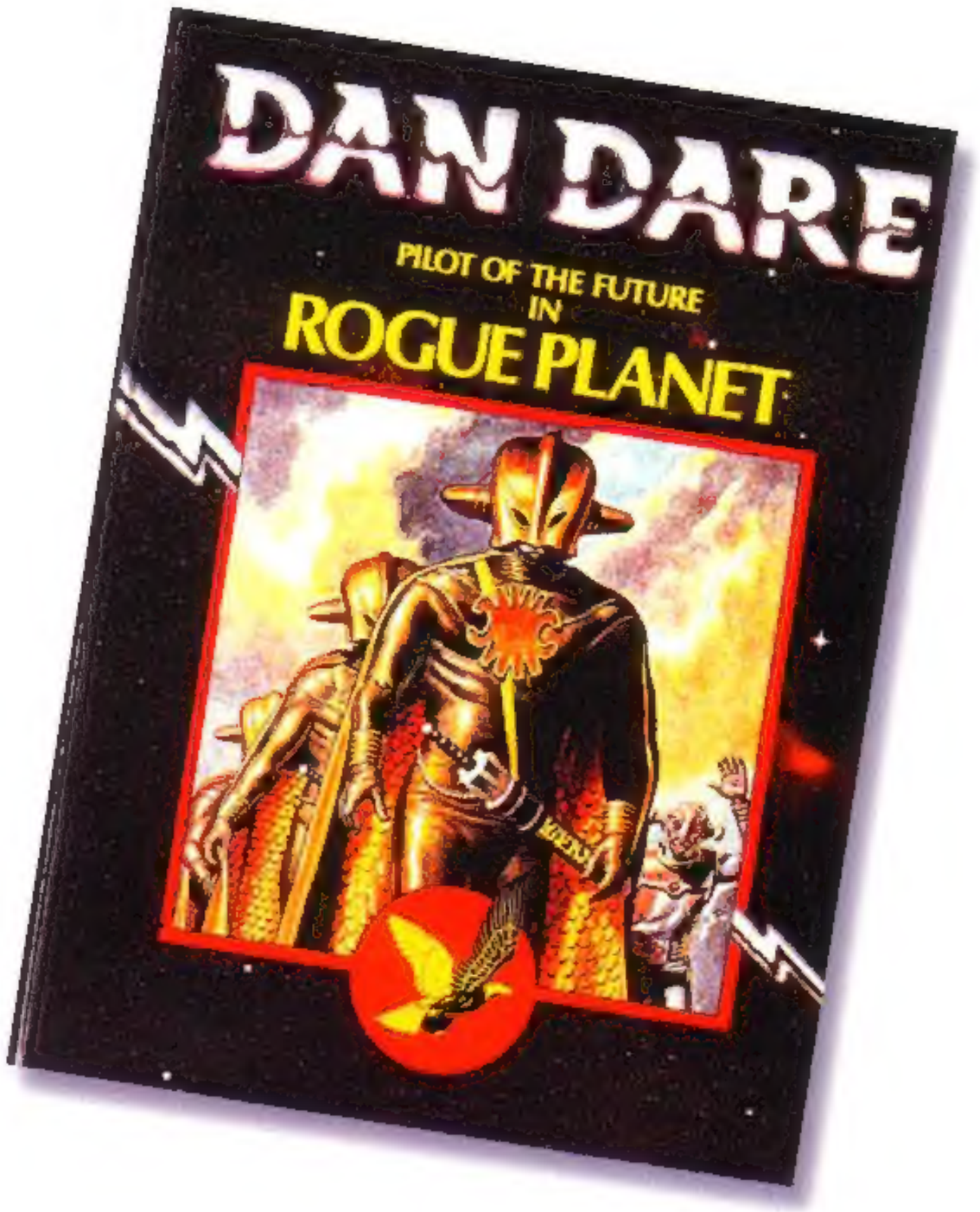
Initially Roger studied silversmithing, then furniture design and in 1964 made his first designs for his, later to be famous, "Sea Urchin Chair". In 1965 he joined the Royal College of Art furniture school where he made his Sea Urchin Chair which was then exhibited at the Design Centre in London and was borrowed by Lord Snowdon to exhibit at the trade fair in Brussels. He also designed the seating in Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club and produced his first record cover for a group called Gun. This began an ongoing collaboration between Roger and other musicians.

When Roger graduated from the Royal College of Art he continued to live and work in London and in 1971 he produced the first *Osibisa* album cover, which was to attract a lot of attention to his work. Later that same year he designed his first album cover for Yes. Roger and his brother Martyn were also asked to design a stage set for Yes, having to contend with auditorium-sized plans, quite unlike those for a theatre. 1975 also saw the brothers producing a number of large-format, fully illustrated, books including *Views* and *The Album Cover Album*. Roger and Martyn had become publishers.

By 1977 the range of work explored through the books expanded to include not only art connected to music but also the visionary, the fantastic, radical design, and science fiction. Roger had seen *EAGLE* as a young boy and was constantly reminded, by fellow artists and designers, of the influence Frank Hampson's 'Dan Dare' strip had on many of them. So it was decided to make an approach to IPC to see if the rights could be obtained for a series of books based on *EAGLE* features. 'Dan

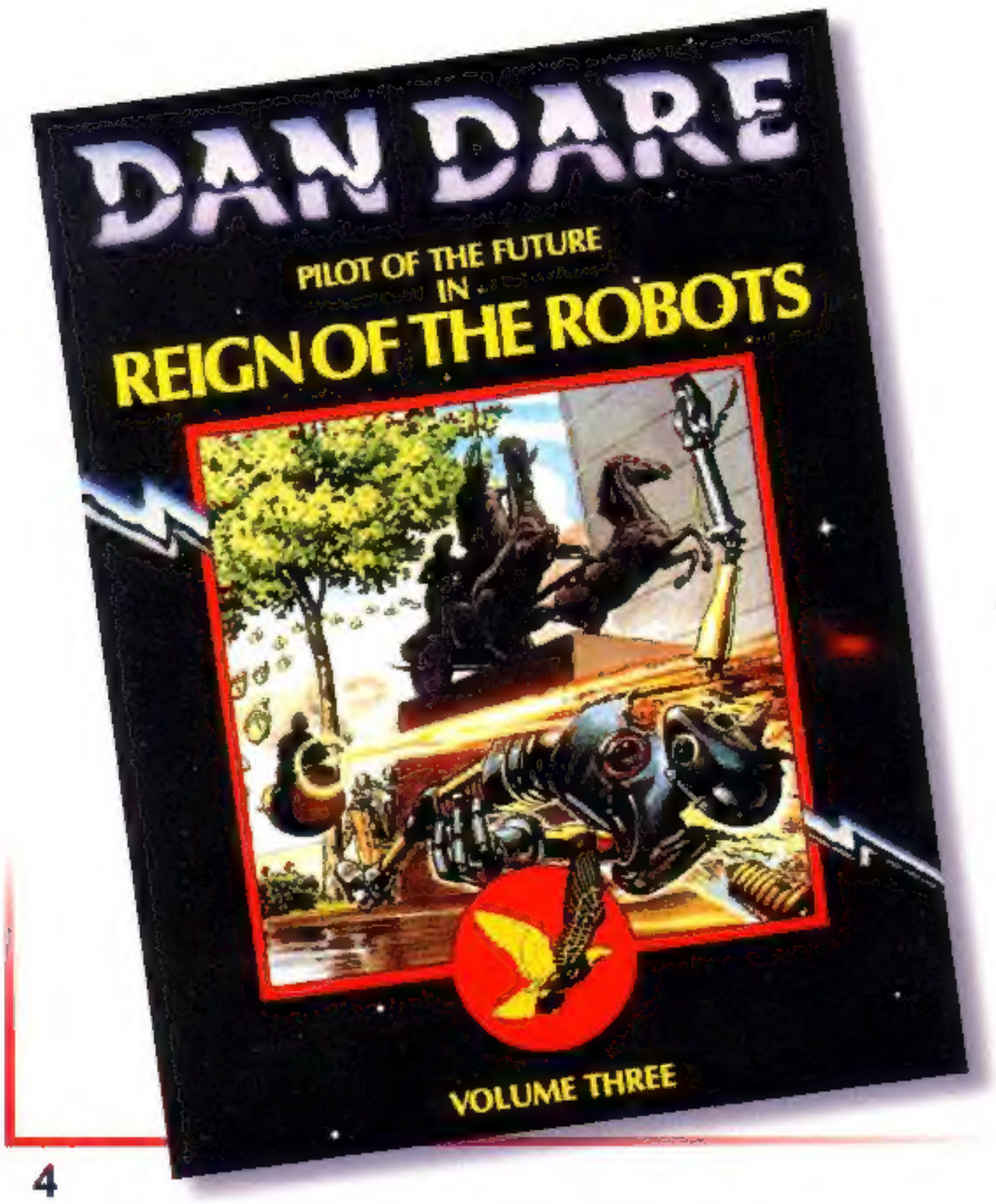
A Dragon's Dream landscape





Dare' was an obvious starter and there were plans for other books, featuring Frank Bellamy's art, as Roger also had a great admiration for him. One of Roger's assistants named James Slattery was allowed to visit the artwork vaults at I.P.C. and borrow a large number of boards.

The artwork was delivered to Roger's home (now) in Brighton. I'm not too clear on the origins of certain pages of Frank's artwork as it was suggested that the originals from the very first 'Dan Dare' story had been unearthed in Europe. It may just be the passage of time or my memory (or both) that have clouded this, but the fact was that Roger Dean had these pages too. Of course the big problem was that there were no complete runs of originals, apart from those from 'Road of Courage' – which was missing just one page. I know for a fact that many boards from 'Rogue Planet' and 'Reign of the Robots' were being sold by dealer Norman Shaw from 1977 onwards. I also know that other "collectors" had pages from nearly every 'Dan Dare' story. So Roger could not hope to produce a complete book from original artwork.



Frank had suggested that as I had a complete run of *EAGLE* (which he was flattered to see were kept in 'Dan Dare' stories and not volumes) I could loan them to Roger's company, Dragon's Dream, to copy.

Dragon's Dream had been founded by Dean and the Dutch printers Chevalier. Although it meant I would be *EAGLE*-less for many months, I happily agreed – I'd do anything for Frank and he knew it! He also phoned me with another request: would I go down to Brighton and collect the originals of the Venus story from Roger Dean? Frank told me that Roger had offered all these pages to him and as they were Frank's "special" favourites he couldn't wait to see them again after so many years. "If you can carry all of them," said Frank, "I know I can rely on you to pick out the best ones and just bring them."

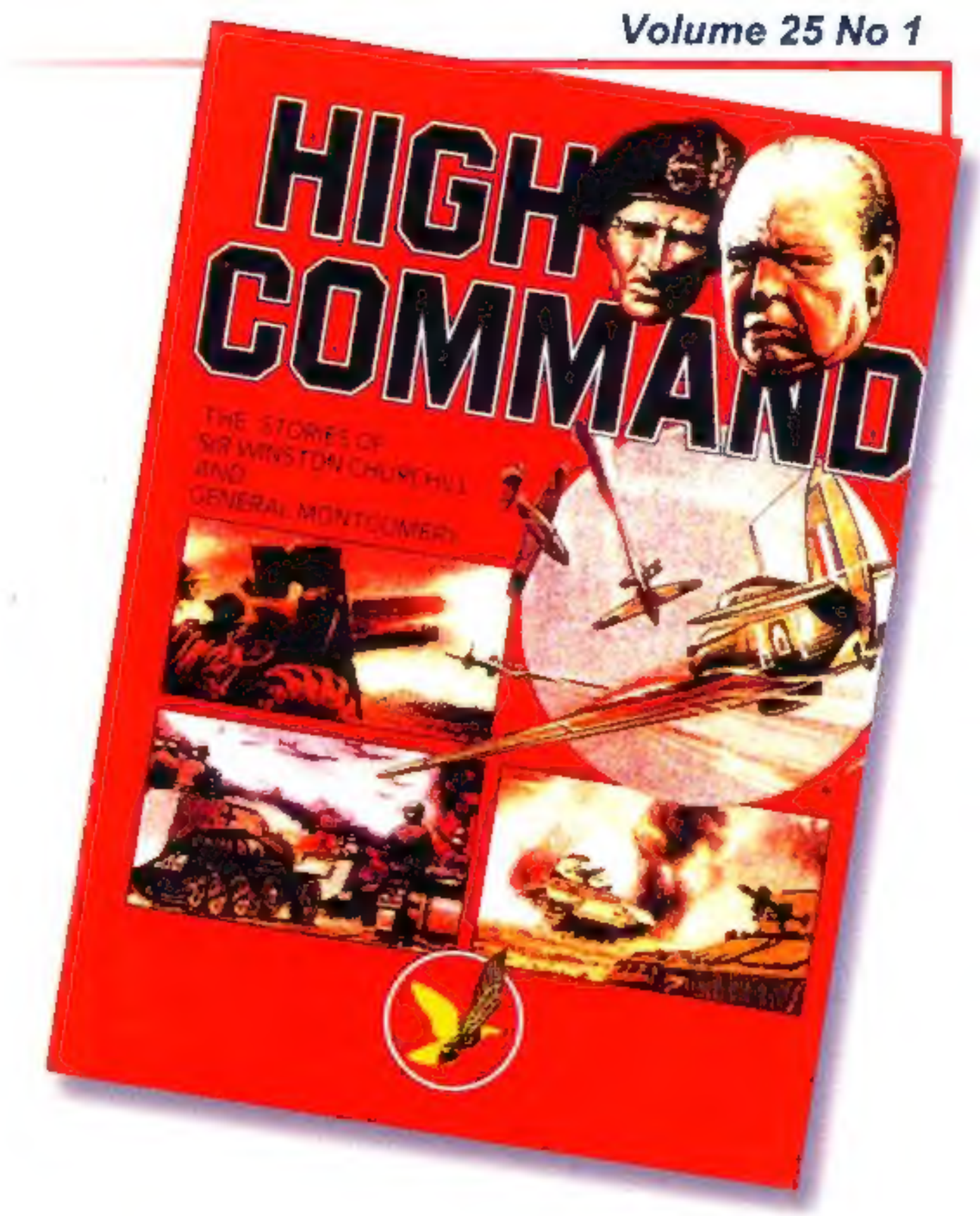
So, armed with a couple of art folders, I set off for Brighton. At that time Roger lived at an address in Beaconsfield Villas and, after I knocked on the door, the talented Mr. Dean invited me in. The first

thing I noticed in the hallway was a large book-rack filled with Roger's output. We went down to his kitchen where I was offered a cup of coffee and I admired a number of cats relaxing about the place. It brought back memories of my visits to Norman Shaw's house in south London, as he too had cats asleep on his stairs, in his office and curled up in various bookcases. As we began our conversation about the artwork I realised that Frank hadn't yet filled Roger in on the purpose of my mission. It was then that I started to feel a little uneasy.

On the plus side Roger knew I was a trusted friend of Frank's and I was loaning his company my volumes of *EAGLE*. But somehow I needed to convince him that Frank had asked me to collect the artwork on his behalf. I just wished he had called Roger in advance of my arrival. I knew the reason Frank couldn't make the trip himself was the pressure of work and it seemed natural to let me do the pick-up and look over the pages. I was in the middle of a long, rather rambling explanation of events when I noticed Roger was giving me a studious look. Feeling even more uneasy, I said as a joke that I hoped he didn't think I was up to no good and trying to steal the artwork for myself. "No, it's not that," replied Roger. "It's just that you're acting that way…"

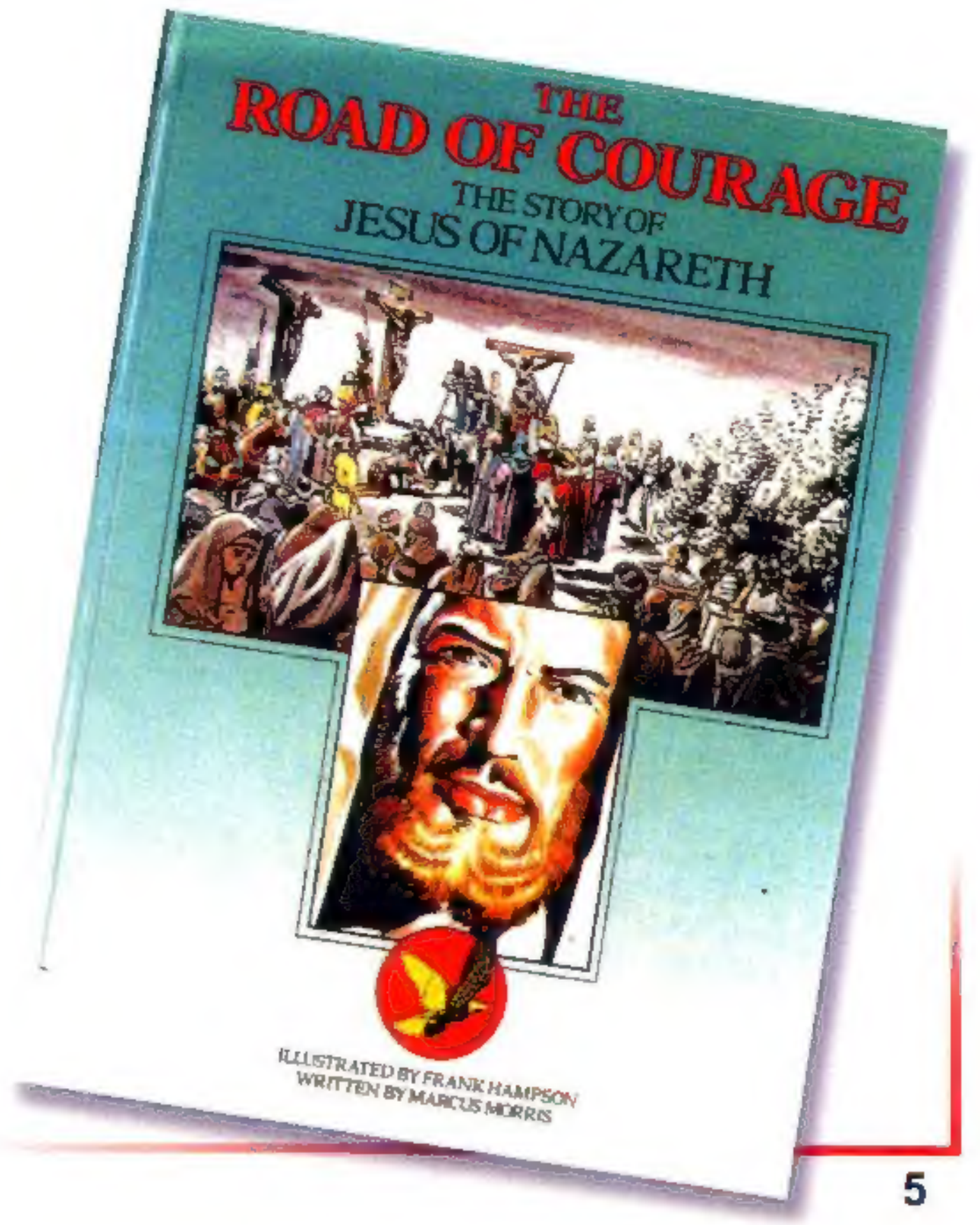
Later we went back upstairs to Roger's front room where all the artwork was stored. There were examples of just about every *EAGLE* strip including 'Riders of the Range', 'Luck of the Legion', centre-spreads, some Bellamy pages, two boxes of Keith Watson's 'Dan Dare' and, of course, the Frank Hampson art. Although I would have loved to spend a few hours looking over all this wonderful material I was there for Frank's benefit and asked about sorting the Venus story pages. "On second thoughts" mused Roger "I think I'd prefer to return all this to Frank in person, if you don't mind." Of course I said I didn't, but I couldn't help thinking Frank and Roger should have agreed this over the telephone. I remarked that Keith Watson would love to see all those examples of his coloured work someday to which Roger replied "Tell Keith to get in touch with me, maybe I can help…" From that I got the impression that Roger might have been ready to let Keith have some of his artwork back. I passed on the message to Keith but he never took up the offer and, as far as I know, all the boards went back to I.P.C.

Frank did get the Venus pages back, with a view to renovating them. He still worried that I.P.C. would claim them and offered to do a deal with the company whereby he kept half and they kept the other half. While the artwork was not complete (a number of pages had gone missing) Frank's idea



was that he would hang on to the better examples and let I.P.C. have the lesser ones. To all this Roger Dean was strongly against – "Why doesn't Frank just keep quiet? I didn't return these pages to have him give them back to I.P.C!" In the end Frank kept all the boards and framed a select few to hang in his dining room.

As people Frank and Roger got on well together and once, when I told Roger that Frank was unwell, his reaction was "I hope it's not too serious," then added with his business hat on, "It will be a shame if he's not around to see the books we are doing in his honour."



Roger Dean questioned the use of "fan art" for the Eaglecon logo

We all got together in Brighton in the summer of 1979 at the Seacon Convention. Frank and I were doing a "fringe" slide talk and Roger was there to show Frank a dummy of the first book, *The Man from Nowhere*. Keeping to his criterion of making his books visually exciting, the cover of this first volume was very striking. The use of black was carried over onto the inside pages, forming a background to all the frames. Frank and Dorothy seemed pleased with the look, as I did. There were also a few frame originals from both Hampson's and Bellamy's 'Dare' on show. With the various *Astral Group* members about too, along with James Slattery and Roger's father Bill, it was a very friendly gathering.

I wrote a favourable review of the book for the S.S.I. newsletter, only to have Keith Watson write a completely opposite view. Keith felt the black ruined the very appeal of the 'Dare' strip. We discussed this and, in true Brian Clough style, decided Keith was right!

To help the first book Frank did a signing at the Forbidden Planet bookshop in London's Denmark Street in October, 1979. Dorothy accompanied Frank and sat patiently with him during the proceedings. Frank, even for a time, sported an *Alien* cap – this being the big science fiction film of the moment.

There was a very good show of fans and Frank seemed pleased with the attention. It was also a chance for *Astral Group* members to promote *EAGLE*'s 30th Anniversary convention, to be held the following year.

While more books were planned, we only saw the three that formed the trilogy, *The Road of Courage* and Frank Bellamy's *High Command. "Dan Dare 4"* was going into production as volume 3 had left Dan in Sir Hubert's arms and looking "out of it". Sadly the three *Dan Dare* books suffered a drop in quality but some good things came out of it. Not least the return of Frank's artwork, the fresh interest the books created in 'Dan Dare' and a chance to see *The Road of Courage* in a new light. There was also Roger's offer to assist with the *EAGLE* Convention.

In the *Astral Group Newsletter* No. 4 (1979-80) Adrian Perkins, while covering the build-up to the convention and the actual event, asked why Dragon's Dream/Roger Dean did not attend. I can only put forward my own take on this. Right from the start Roger felt that certain aspects of the *EAGLE* Convention were not being treated in a professional way. He had offered (as far as I know) to produce literature and promotional items from his own studio. He had also put forward the idea of creating a special "award" for our VIP guests and showed me an example of what he had in mind. It all looked very impressive and a worthwhile tribute to ex-*EAGLE* contributors. As I had no direct involvement with the finances of the convention I can only assume that the 'Triumvirate' of Adrian Perkins (self-elected Chairman), Roger Bayliss (Secretary) and Bruce Porteous (Treasurer) had gone for a cash payment from Roger rather than accept his suggestions.

"Why are you using this?" he asked me while holding an *EAGLE* Convention headed sheet. It was the one drawn by Keith Page and signed by him. "You have the original artists' work – why use fan art?" At one of our steering committee meetings Keith Page had put forward the idea of displaying his versions of 'Dan Dare' in the art show. Also, during the opening ceremony of the convention, some of the committee were asked to say a few words to the audience. When it came to Keith's turn he said he had nothing to say. Was he just there to promote himself? I still wonder. There were also suggestions from Roger and James Slattery that there should be changes at the top of the convention committee as personalities seemed to be clashing. In the end Roger did loan us his display panels, which made all the difference to the artwork show, and also included the beautifully framed Hampson and Bellamy originals.

While trying to help Beverly Watson and Nancy Bellamy locate some of their respective husbands' artwork I came into contact with Roger again. Sadly he told me that, as far as he knew, the pages he had borrowed so many years ago had all been returned to I.P.C. Their fate remains a mystery. I also spotted Roger on TV one evening during a BBC South East News broadcast. Arthur Brown, best known as The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, was doing a revival of his hit song *Fire* and had an accident when his hair caught alight during a performance. He crashed off stage into some large paintings before being extinguished. The artist whose paintings had been hit by the burning pop star was asked if there had been any damage to his work. That artist was Roger Dean, still looking quite youthful. ❑

INSIDE INFORMATION

By L. ASHWELL WOOD

by
Steve Holland and Jeremy Briggs
Pictures by Richard Sheaf

The *Inside Information* books by Leslie Ashwell Wood appear to have been the final cutaway drawings produced in Ashwell Wood's long and productive career. (He was born in 1903 and died in 1973).

These books were produced by Benwig Books, which as Steve Holland (on his Bear Alley weblog (www.bearalley.blogspot.com) notes: "... was an imprint of a religious publisher called St Paul Publications (based at Langley, Slough, Bucks) who continued to publish until the mid-1990s. Jackdaw Books was another of their imprints under which appeared *Benwig the Bee* by Mary Kathleen Richardson (1968), which explains where the name of the company came from. But not how Ashwell Wood came to be in charge of it." (He was listed as the company's owner and sole employee - the last accounts lodged were for 1970/1971.)

These 8 x 6 inch landscape format hardback books were aimed at children and were all written and illustrated by Ashwell Wood. Each book has eight single-page colour cutaways and one two-page centrespread colour cutaway, plus three black and white illustrations, all newly produced for each book, with one of the single colour-pages being reused for the cover.

The books were published in three batches of four as can be seen from the dates given (below) and the first batch of four titles were also released in softcover under the same Standard Book Numbers, with a generic cover design. Indeed some of the hardback versions of the first four books are softcover books with the hardback glued onto the softcover, while others were printed as hardbacks.

The more colourful front covers of the hardback books are shown on pages 8 and 9.

There were 12 titles in all, as follows:

Inside Information On Military Aircraft (1969 – SBN 901-798 096)

Inside Information On Modern Ships (1969 – SBN 901-798 07x)

Inside Information On Trains Today (1969 – SBN 901-798 088)

Inside Information On Civil Aircraft (1969 – SBN 901-798 061)

Inside Information On Space Travel (1970 – SBN 901-798 150)

Inside Information On Naval Ships (1970 – SBN 901-798 126)

Inside Information On Racing Cars (1970 – SBN 901-798 142)

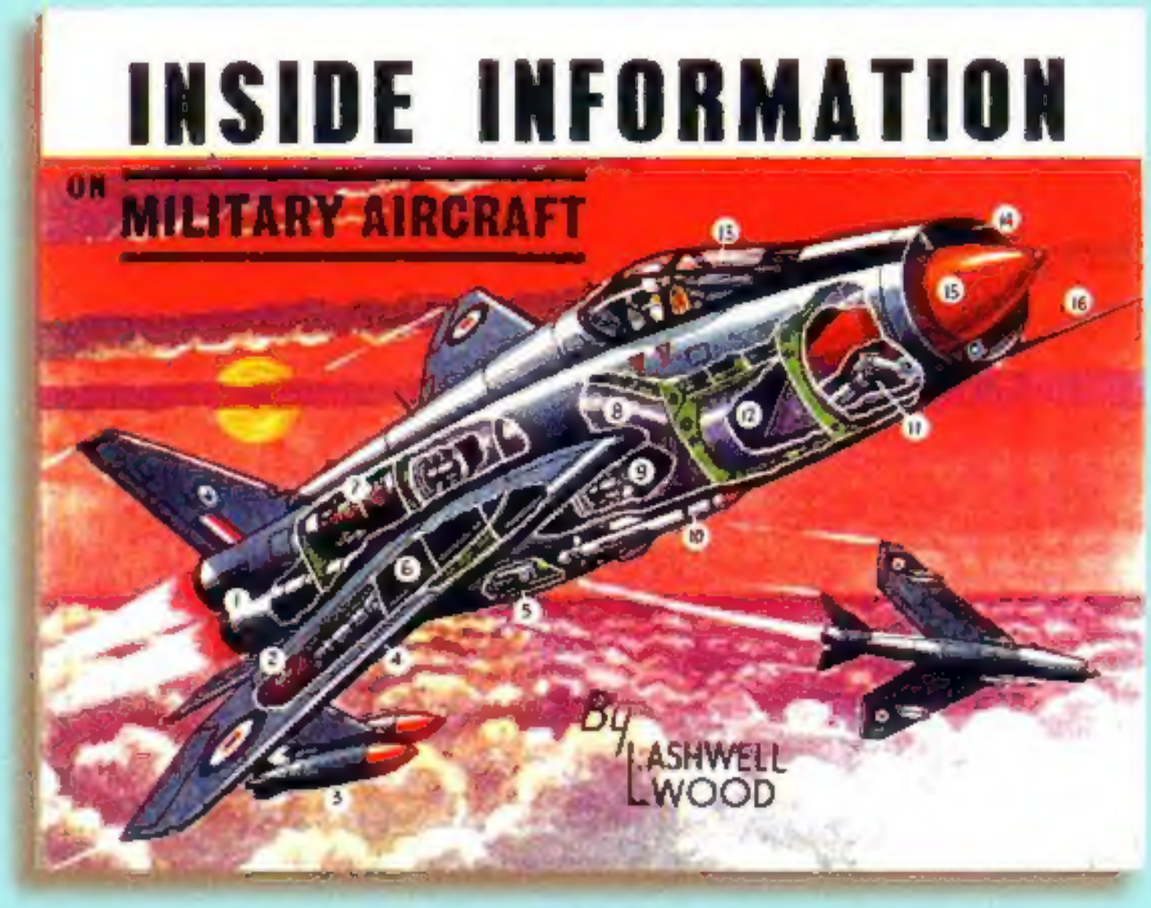
Inside Information On Hovercraft (1970 – SBN 901-798 134)

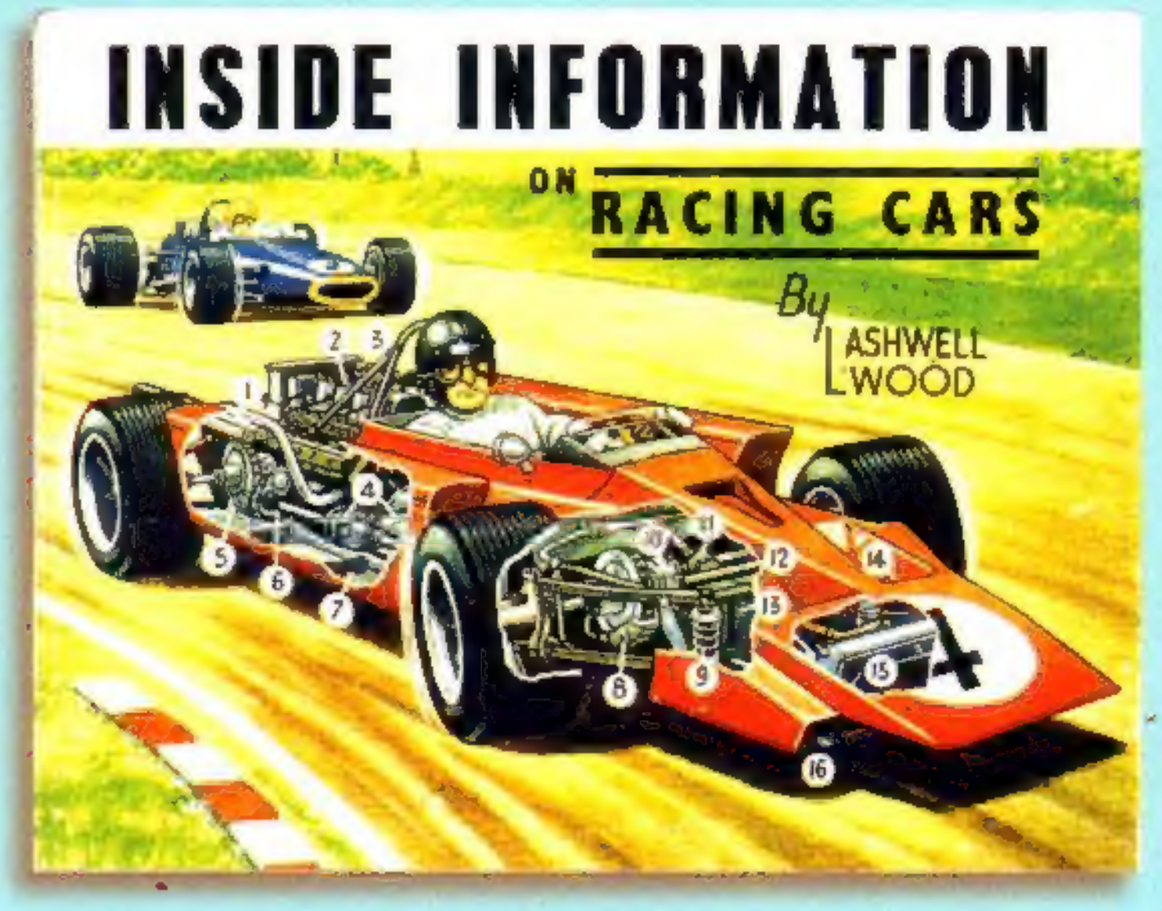
Inside Information On Exploring Under the Sea (1971? – SBN 901-798 31 2)

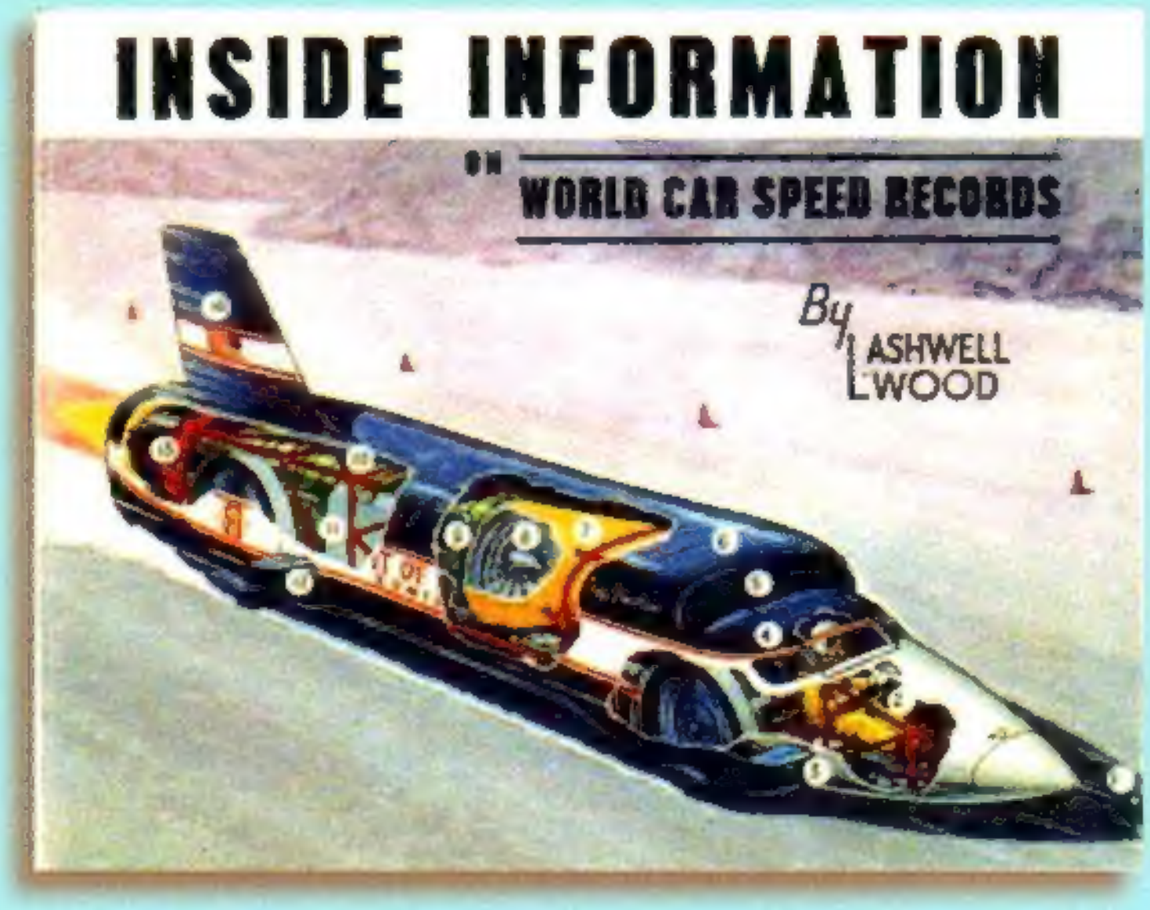
Inside Information On Famous Steam Trains (1971? – SBN 901-798 32 0)

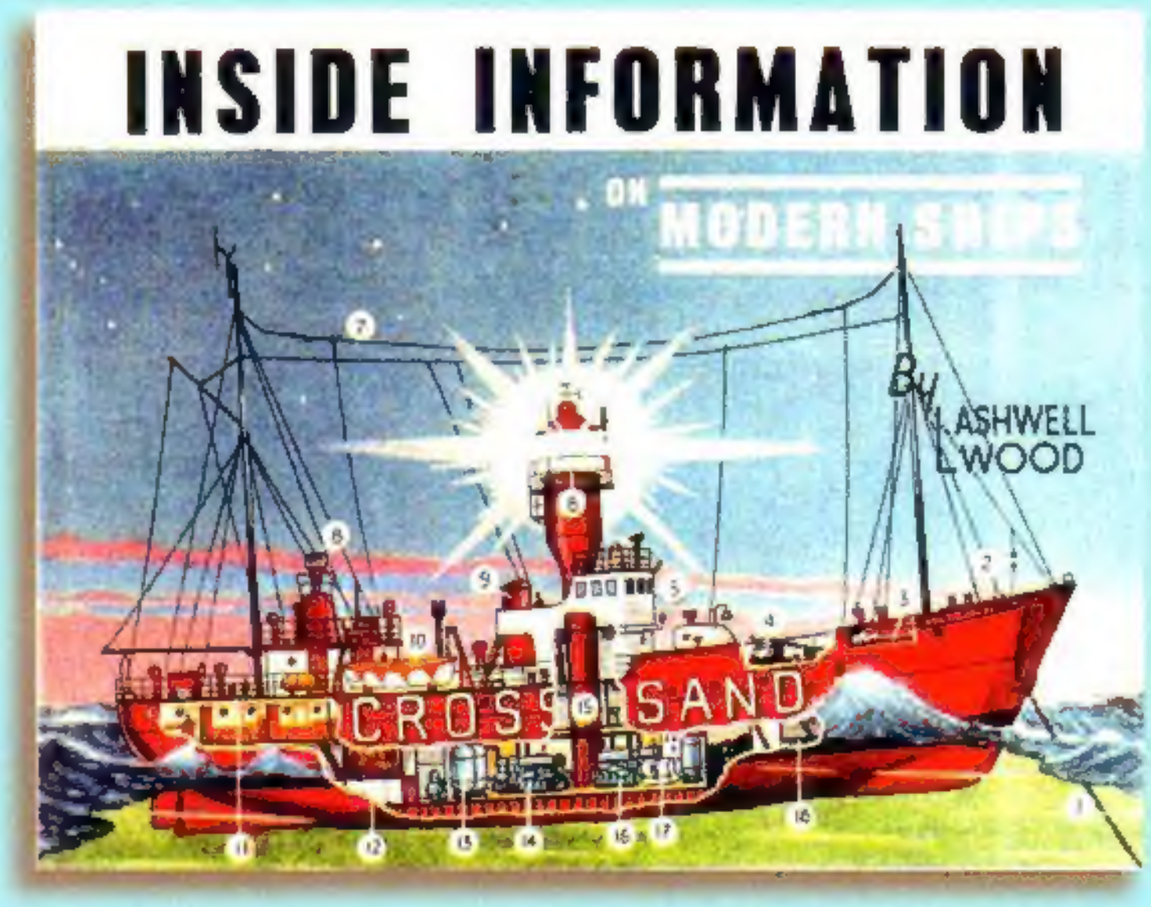
Inside Information On World Car Speed Records (1971? – SBN 901-798 33 9)

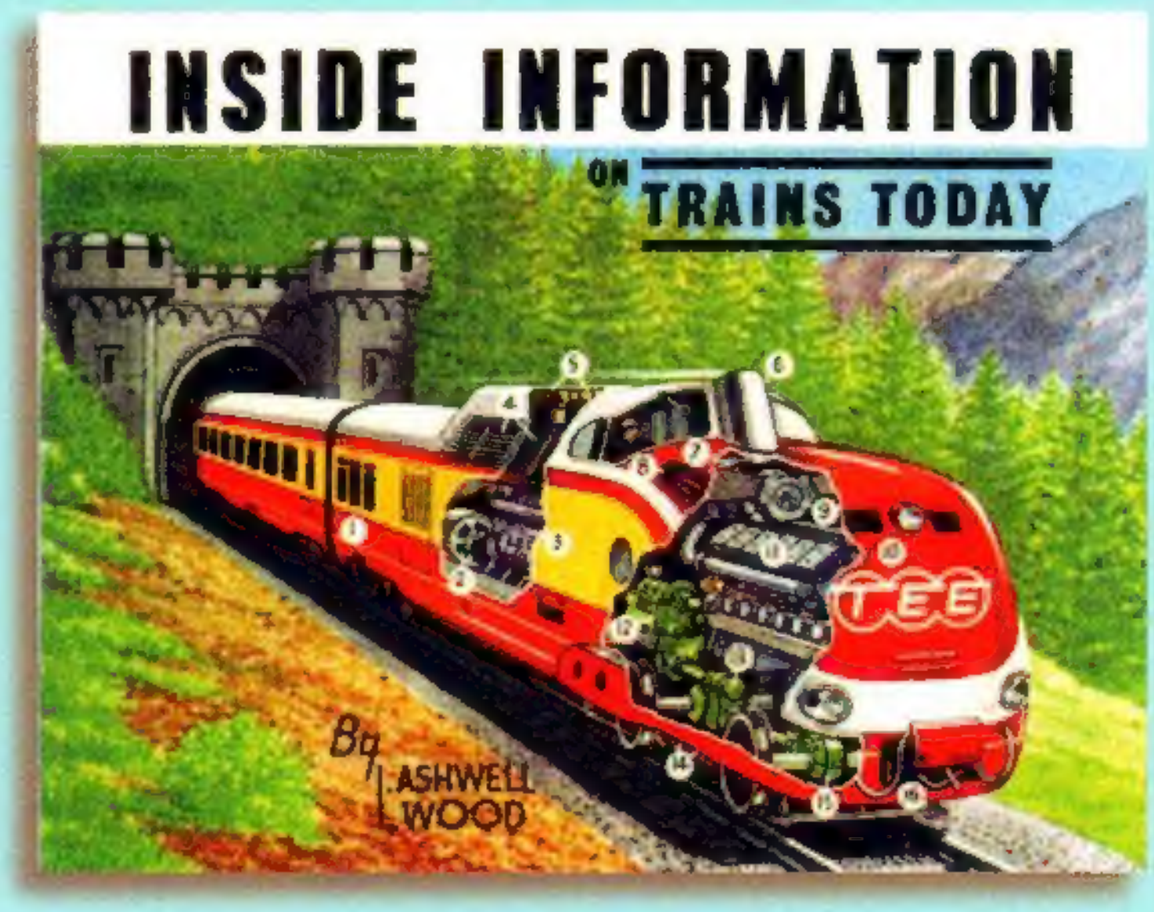
Inside Information On Tanks and Armoured Cars (1971? – SBN 901-798 34 7)

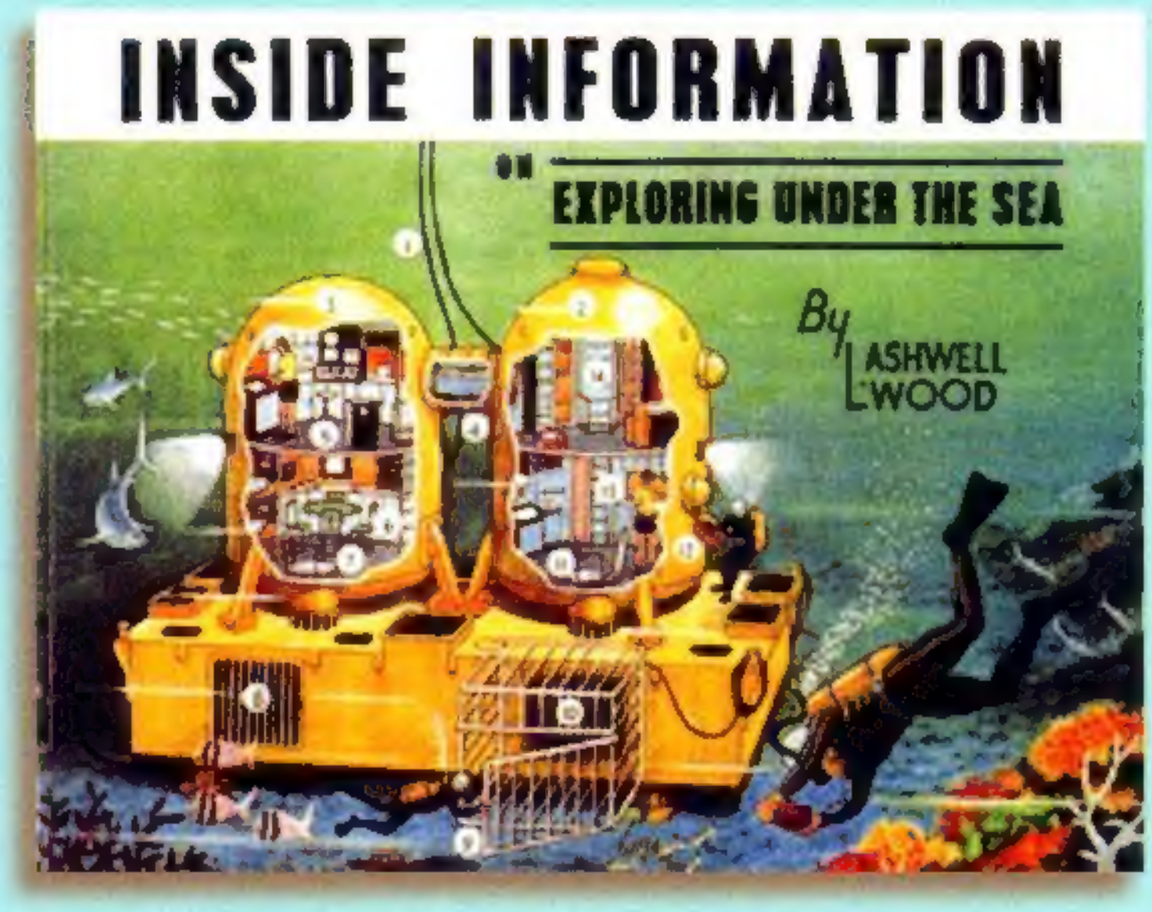

INSIDE INFORMATION
ON MILITARY AIRCRAFT
By L. ASHWELL WOOD


INSIDE INFORMATION
ON RACING CARS
By L. ASHWELL WOOD


INSIDE INFORMATION
ON WORLD CAR SPEED RECORDS
By L. ASHWELL WOOD

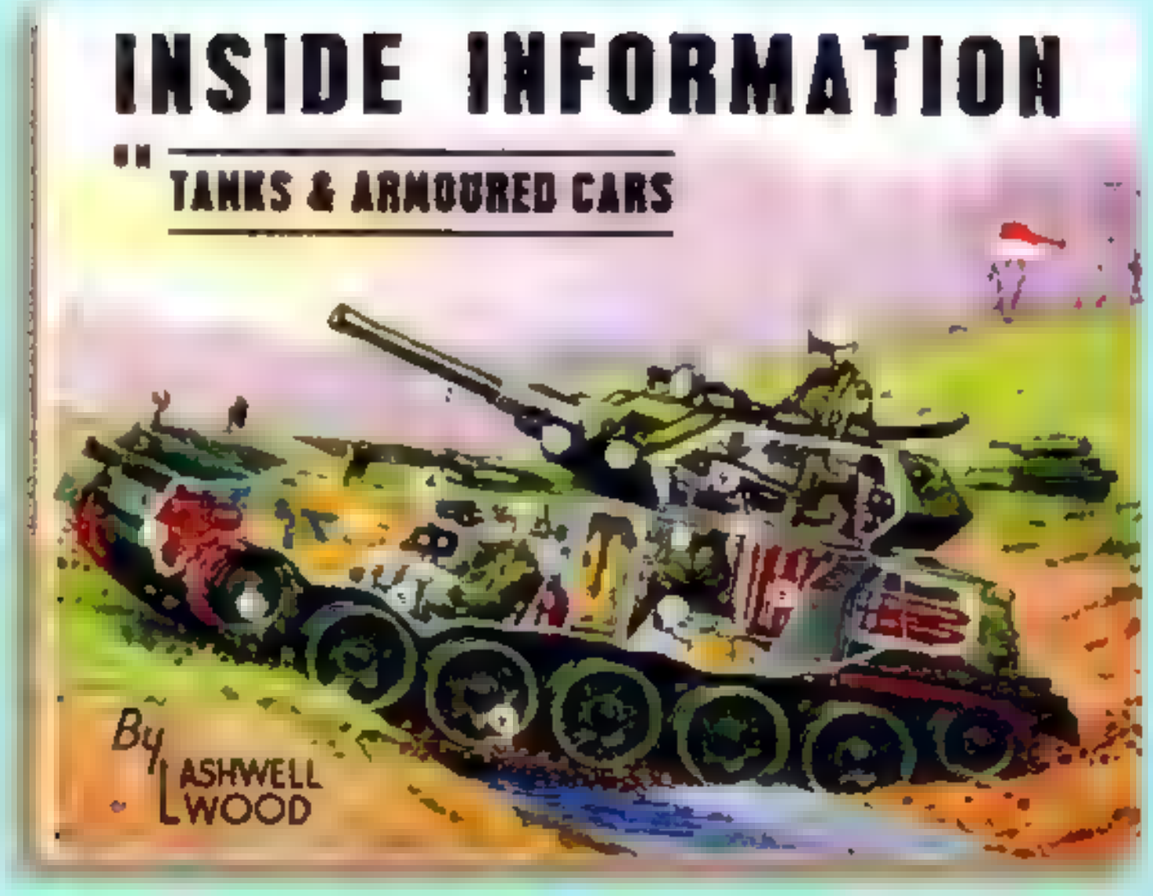

INSIDE INFORMATION
ON MODERN SHIPS
By L. ASHWELL WOOD
CROSS SAND


INSIDE INFORMATION
ON TRAINS TODAY
TEE
By L. ASHWELL WOOD

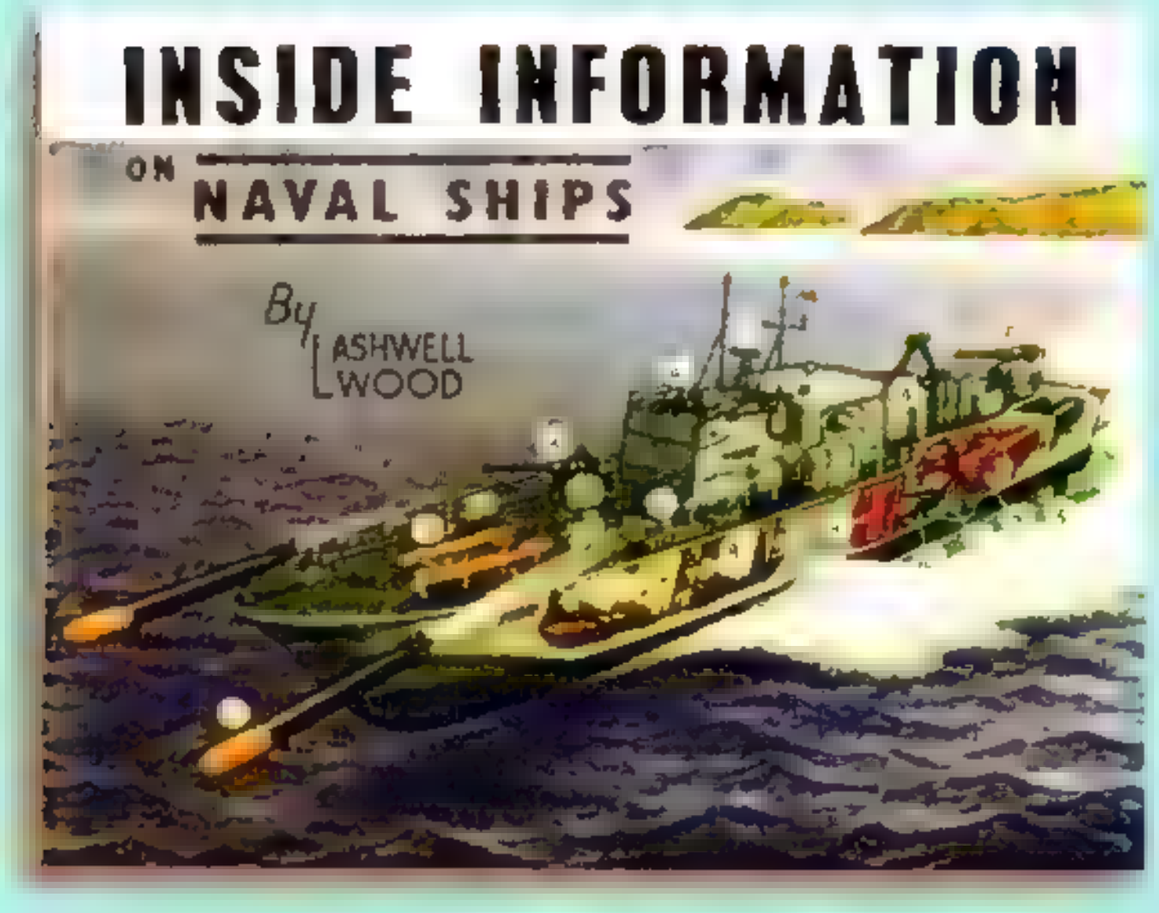

INSIDE INFORMATION
ON EXPLORING UNDER THE SEA
By L. ASHWELL WOOD

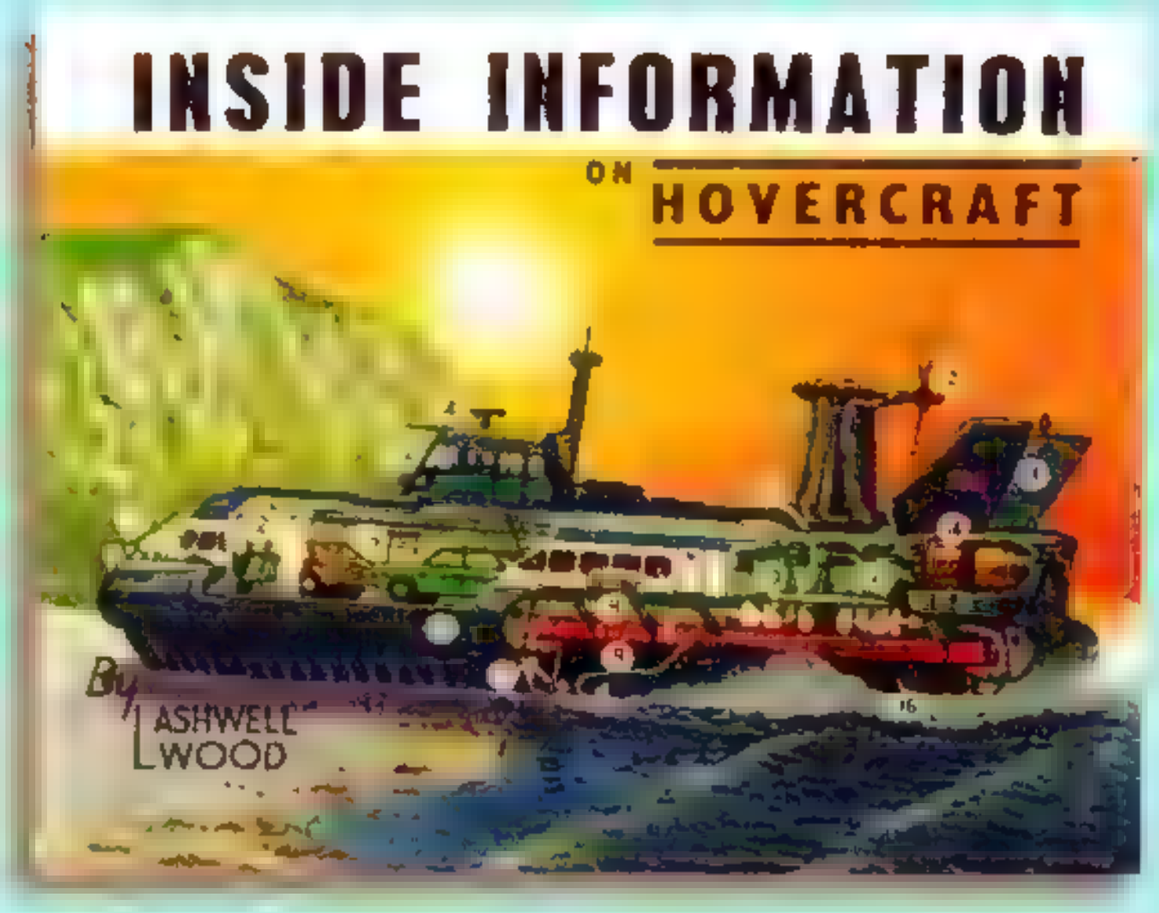
INSIDE INFORMATION
By ASHWELL LWOOD
ON
SPACE TRAVEL

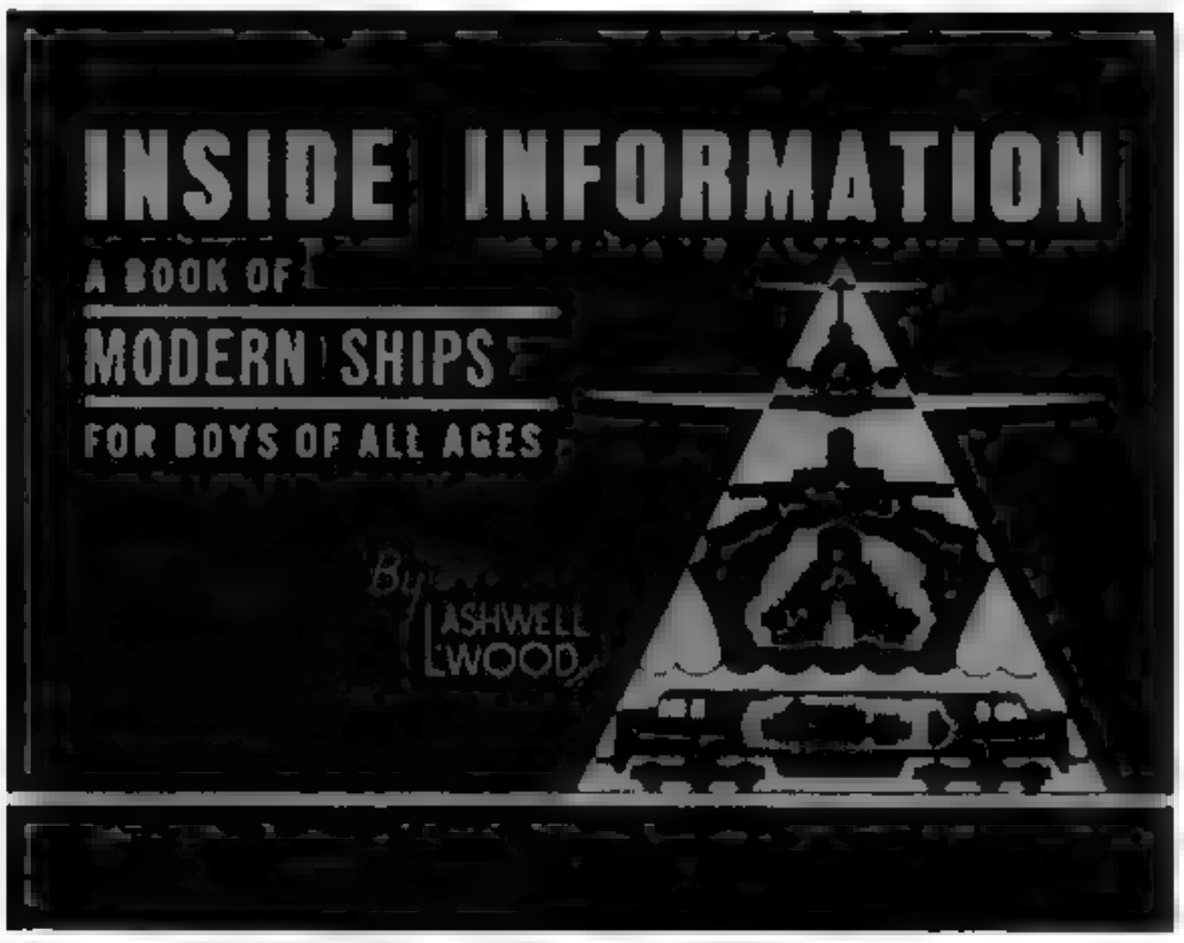
INSIDE INFORMATION
ON
CIVIL AIRCRAFT
By ASHWELL LWOOD

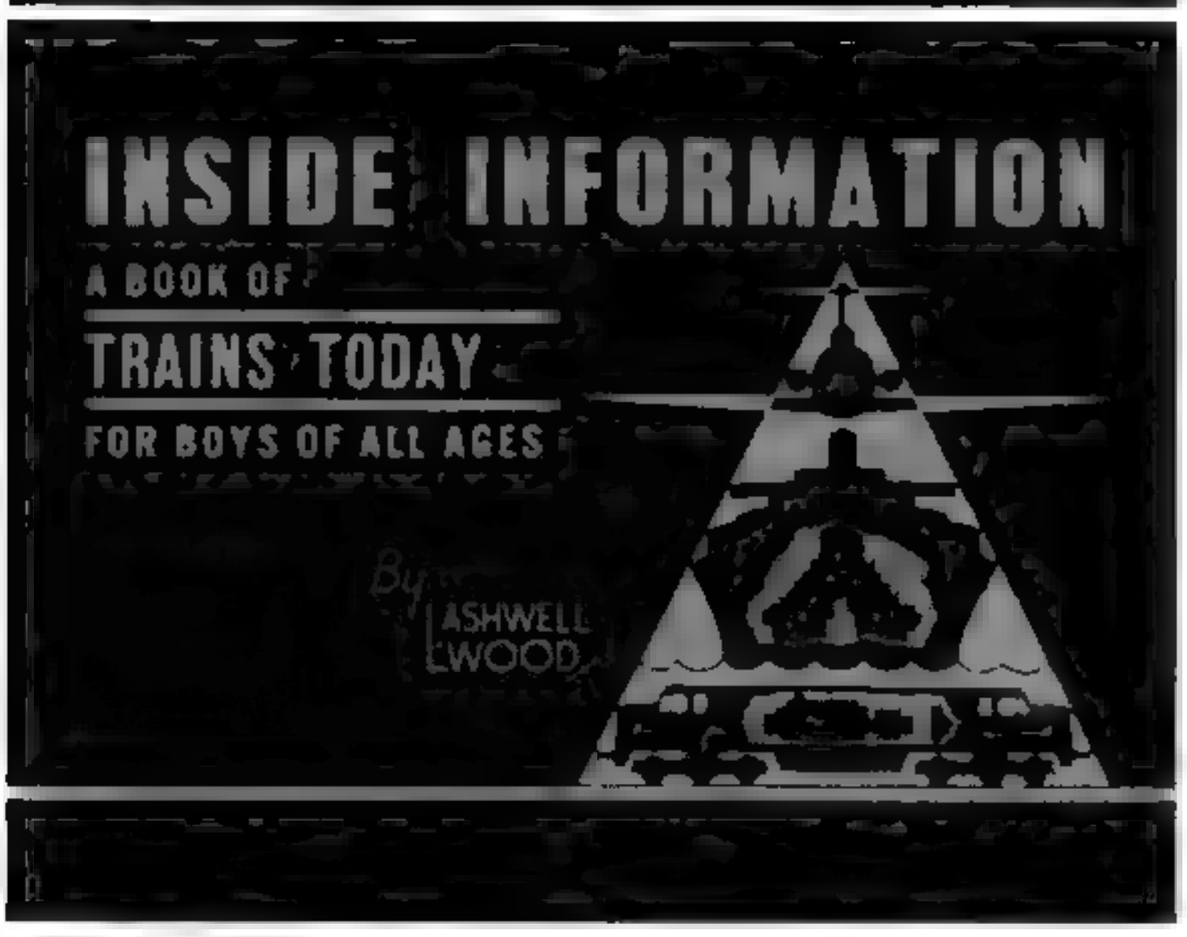

INSIDE INFORMATION
ON
TANKS & ARMOURED CARS
By ASHWELL LWOOD

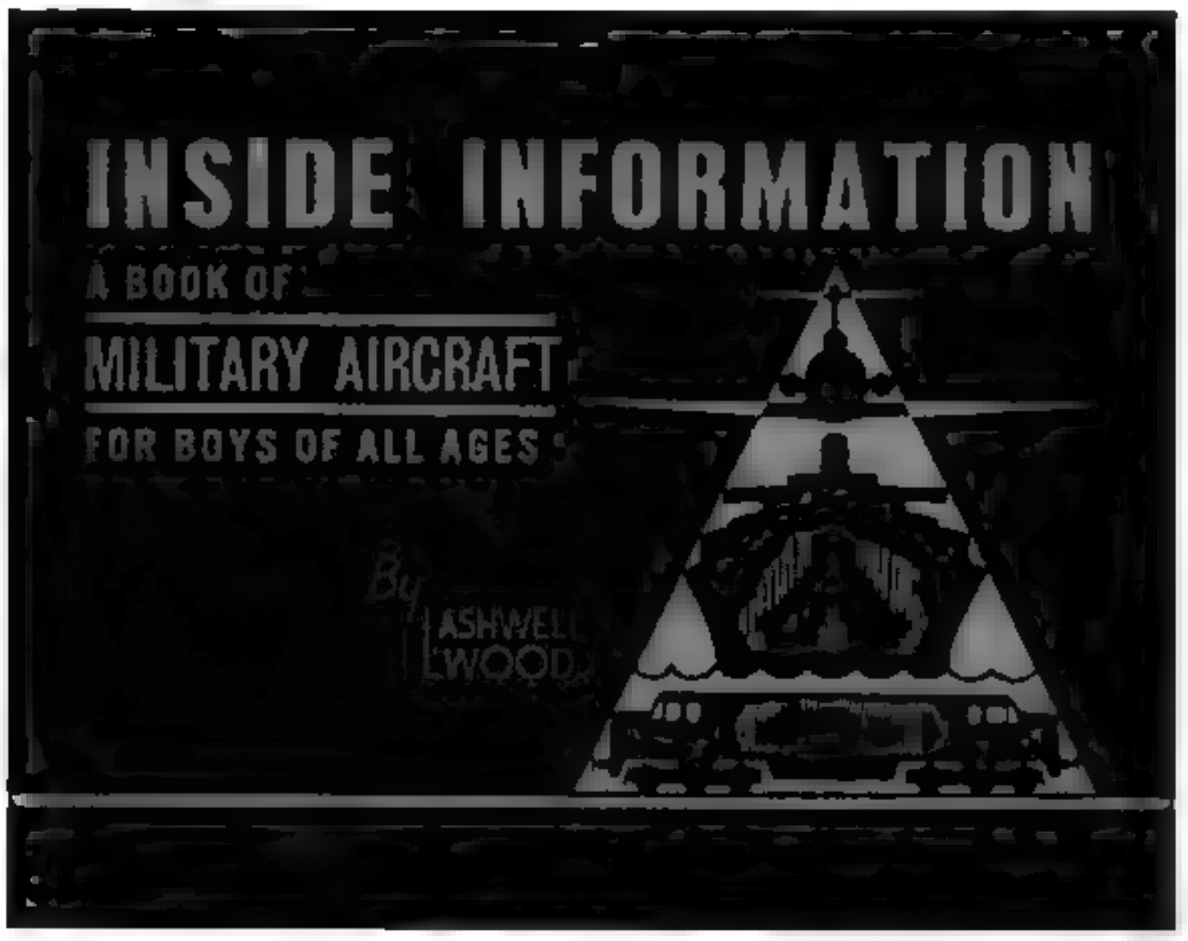
INSIDE INFORMATION
ON
FAMOUS STEAM TRAINS
By ASHWELL LWOOD


INSIDE INFORMATION
ON
NAVAL SHIPS
By ASHWELL LWOOD


INSIDE INFORMATION
ON
HOVERCRAFT
By ASHWELL LWOOD

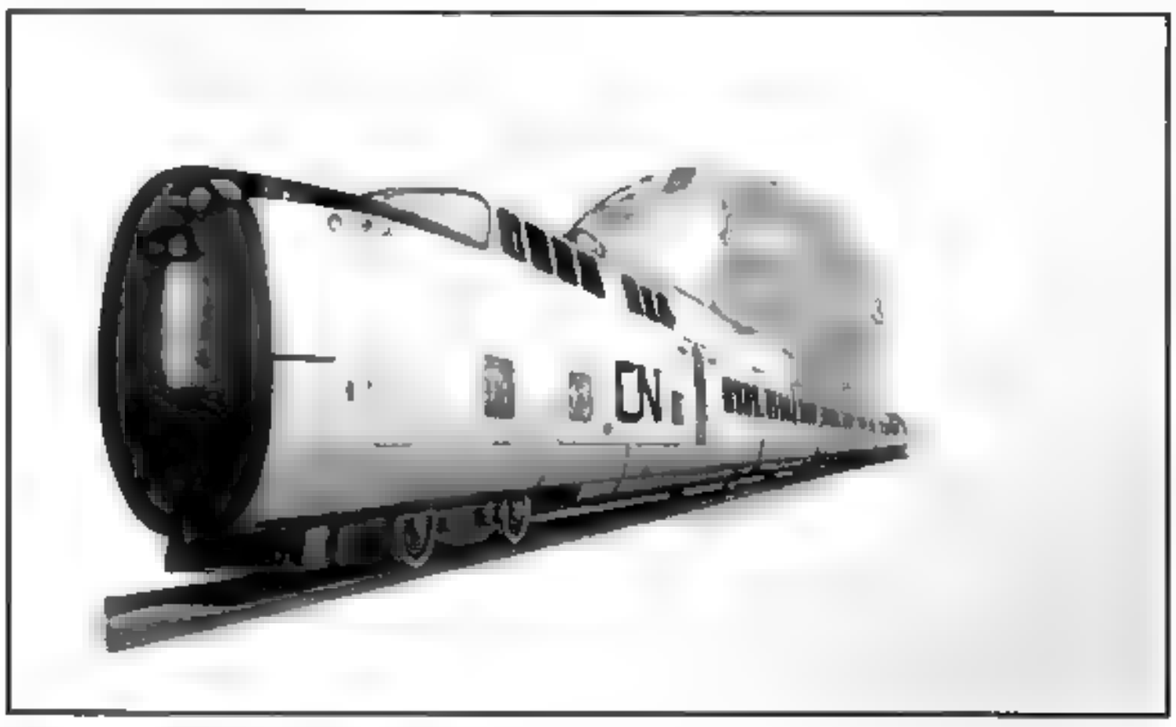


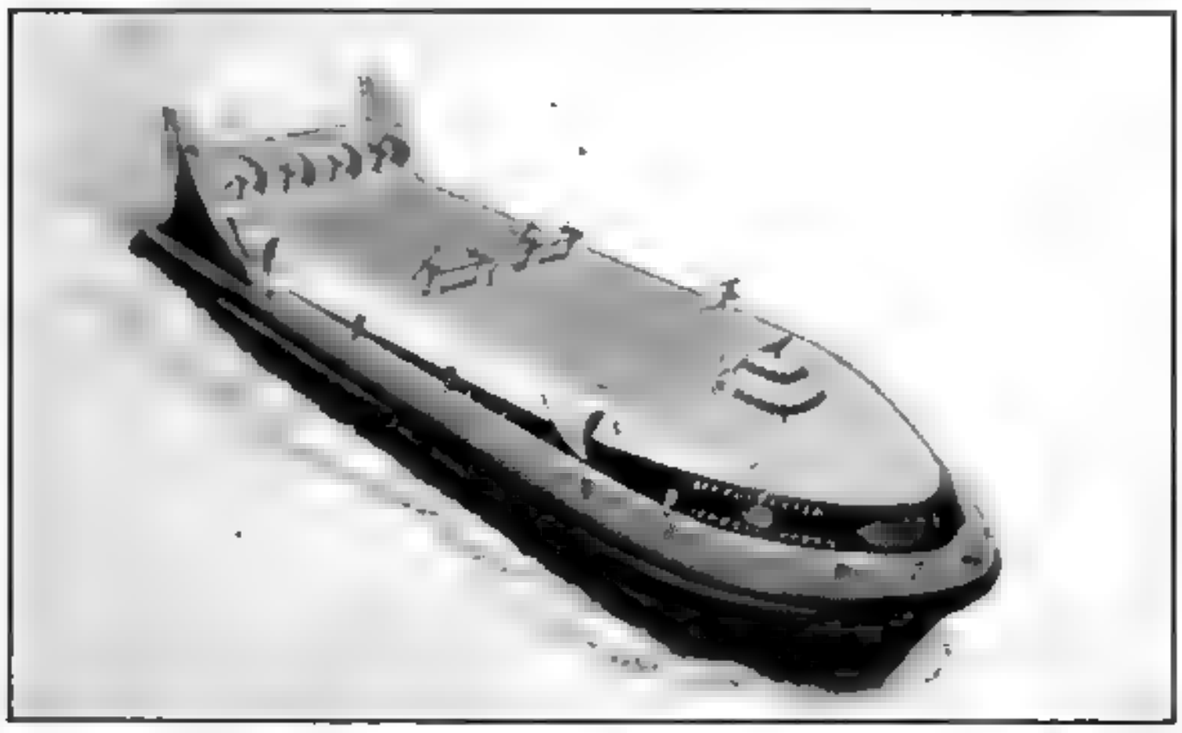


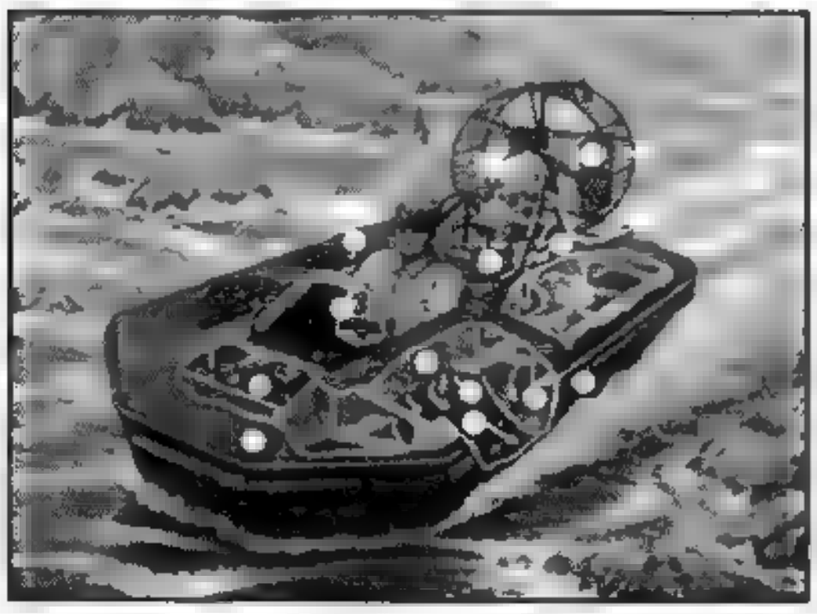


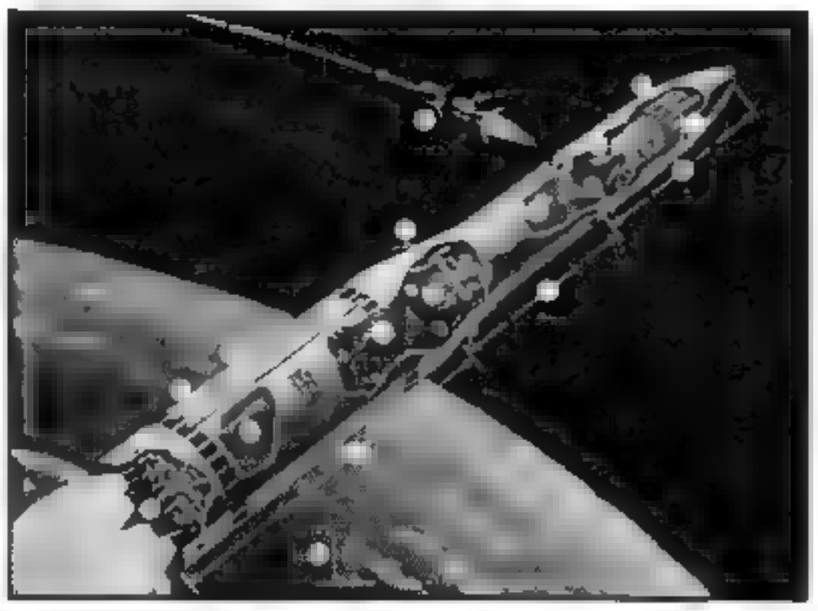
Three (of the four) soft-back versions are shown above - Inside Information on Civil Aircraft is not pictured

In recent years, The Illustration Art Gallery website: www.illustrationartgallery.com has been the place to go to pick up reasonably priced original art from these books. They have sold a number of pieces of original art from *Space Travel*, *Hovercraft* and *Trains Today*. As I write this they currently have 22 pieces of artwork for sale from £35 upwards. Below are some thumbnails of what is currently on offer. ❑









Rye - Pugwash's Town

by Richard Sheaf

Captain Pugwash is 60 years young!

RYE CASTLE

RYF Museum have launched a display to celebrate the 60th birthday of much loved characte Captain Pugwash

The bumbling pirate was he most f mous creation of Rye dissecatur John Ryan who died last year

Rye MP Amber Rudd dropped into a launch party for he exhibition on Sa urday which was opened by h wife Priscilla

She said John R was a much loved and impress ve resident of Rye who's books have been enjoyed for gen erations I was a wonderful event with delicious cake

Attending were 75 members of the Museum Association and their invited

Guests including Rye Mayor John Breeds and c mity music l eader Peter Jones

The Captain (who as goes under the pseudonym of Ray Prewer) personally welcomed his guests assisted by some of the younger members of his mates crew

During the evening Priscilla Ryan cu the tape to mark the open ng of the Mu seum s display of Pugwash memorabilia and the b s s c lebrated n tradtiona fashion with birthday cake and wine

The Pugwash display can be seen at the Museum s East Street site during is normal open ng hours of 10 30am to 5.00pm (last entry 4 30) on Saturdays and Sundays until the end of October

Editor's note: Richard reports on a visit he made to Rye in 2010. From November 2011 to February 2012, the items at Rye Art Gallery were augmented for a more extensive retrospective of John Ryan's work, under the curatorship of John's daughter, Isabel, and covering his whole career

Ever since the *Eagle Society* Dinner in Rye in 1993, when John and Priscilla Ryan so generously welcomed us into their house, I've wanted to go back to Rye and, in the Summer of 2010, I got the chance. Suffice to say that the town is still as lovely as ever and makes for a great day trip – lovely streets, compact town, the Mermaid Inn (the fireplace in the back bar is still as magnificent as ever) and even more antique shops than ever before. Of course if you're a Pugwash fan it is actually even better than that. When I was there there was a display of Pugwash items from the Rye Castle Museum's permanent collection [see above] at the East Street part of the museum. This site should not be confused with the Ypres Tower part, which stands nearer the church, overlooking the marshes and out to sea – also well worth a look.

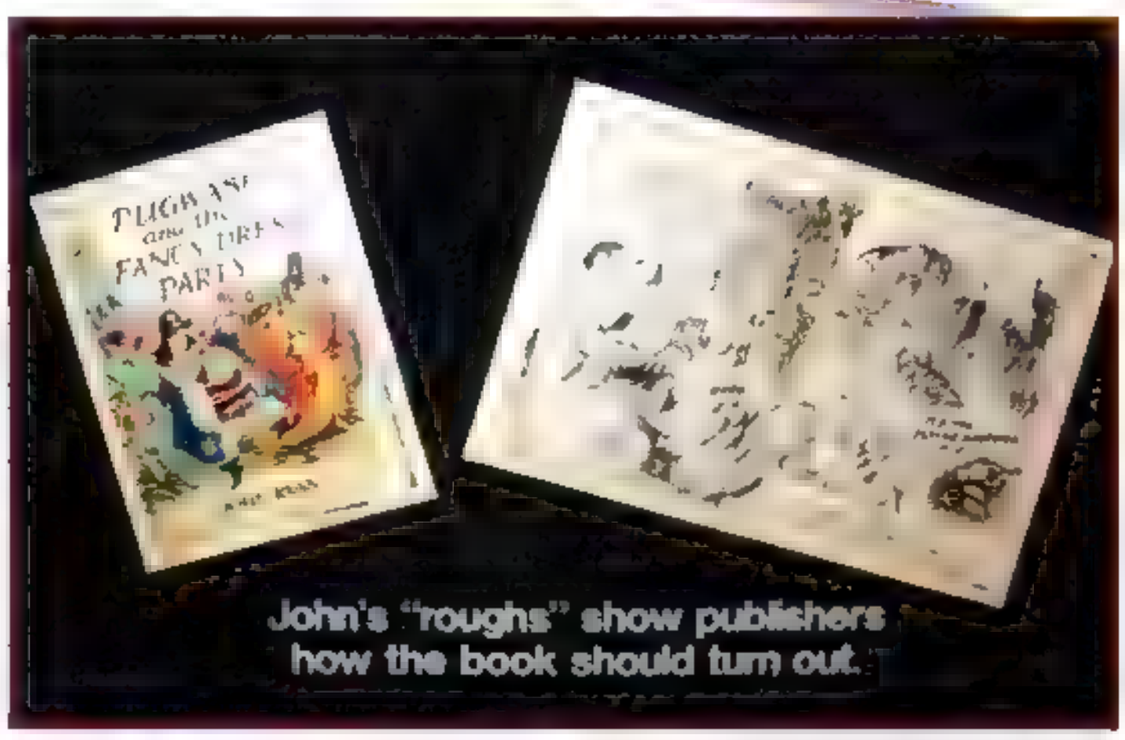
You can see John's rugby shirt from Ampleforth College on the right hand side of the display cabinet (the colours were the inspiration for the Captain's shirt) along with a selection of TV merchandise.

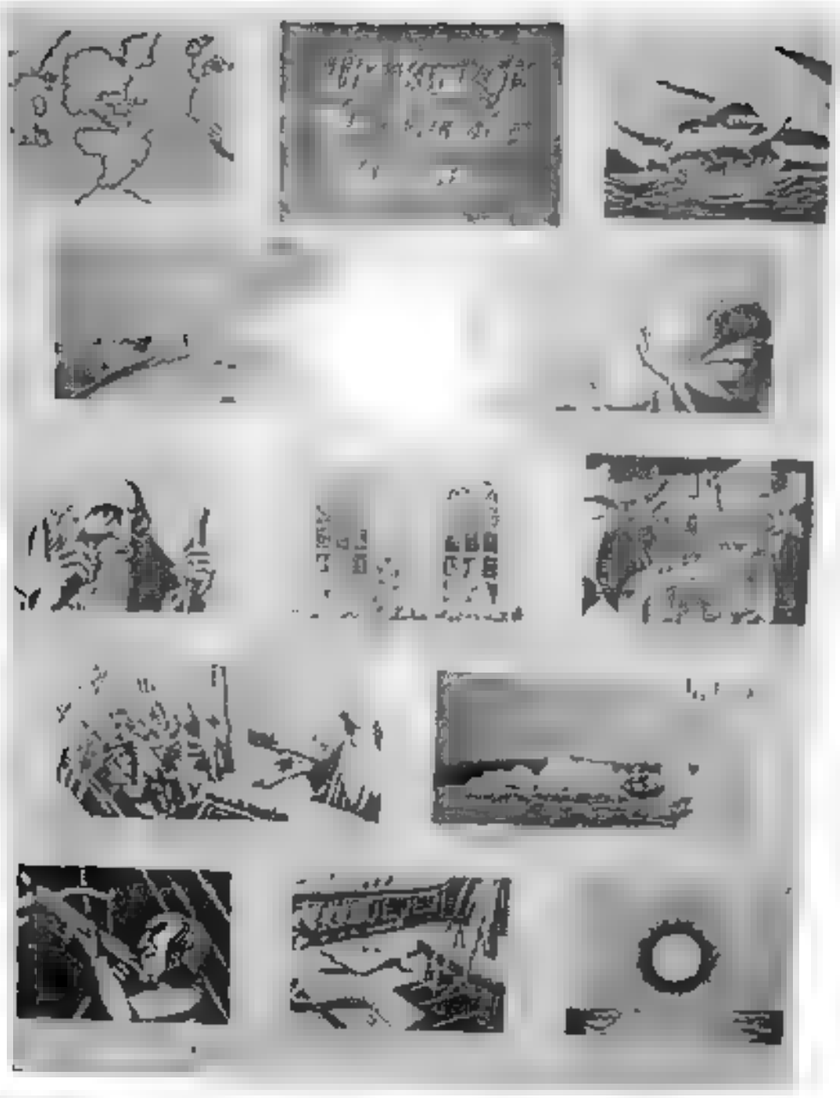
As the clipping [above] shows, the display was opened by Priscilla Ryan for the 2010 season in celebration of 60 years of our intrepid captain – no word on the website on whether this display (itself enlarged from what was there previously) would still be in place in following years.

This site is open much less than the Ypres Tower, so if you want to visit both sites be sure to check opening times etc. in advance. When open, both sites will sell you a Captain Pugwash postcard [see below].

It had obviously been a busy week for Priscilla as she also attended the opening of the Pugwash Nursery at Rye College [see above].

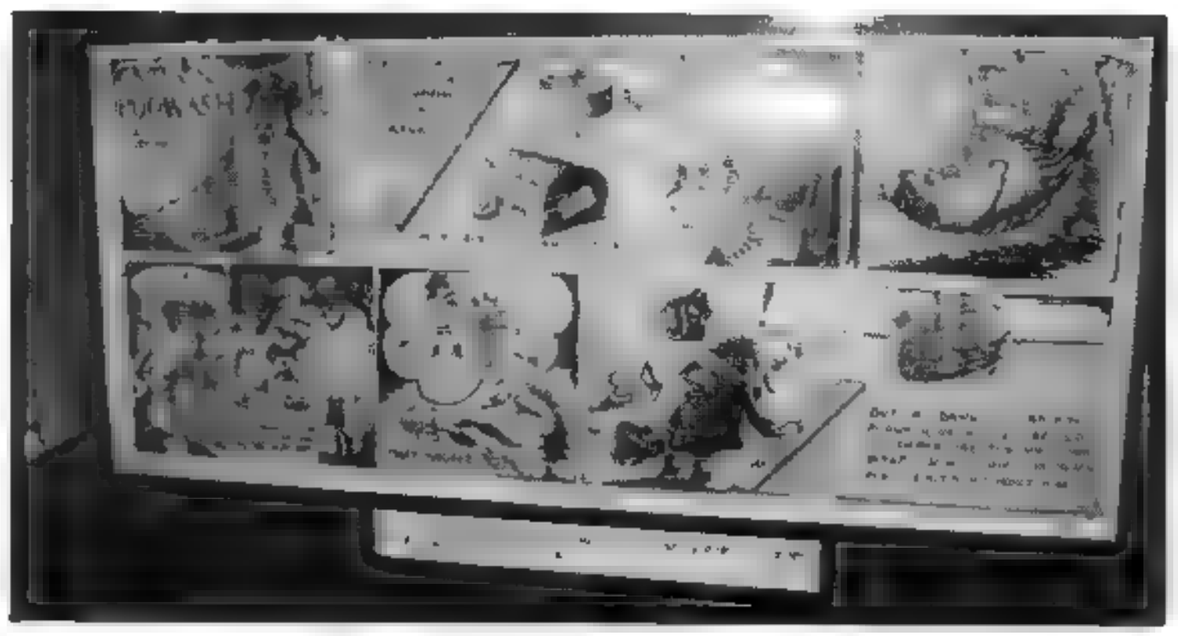
The real delights for the Pugwash aficionado in Rye can be found in the Rye Art Gallery at 107, High Street. Here not only does the gallery postcard set contain 2 unique Pugwash images by John Ryan [pictured above right], but also (on the staircase towards the back of the gallery) a fine display of Pugwash original artwork and photographs [some photographs of which are shown on the rest of this page and the next].





By far the most interesting from an *EAGLE* point of view can be found about halfway up the stairs – for it is here that the original artwork to the very first issue of 'Captain Pugwash' can be found [see above] – or so it appears at first sight!

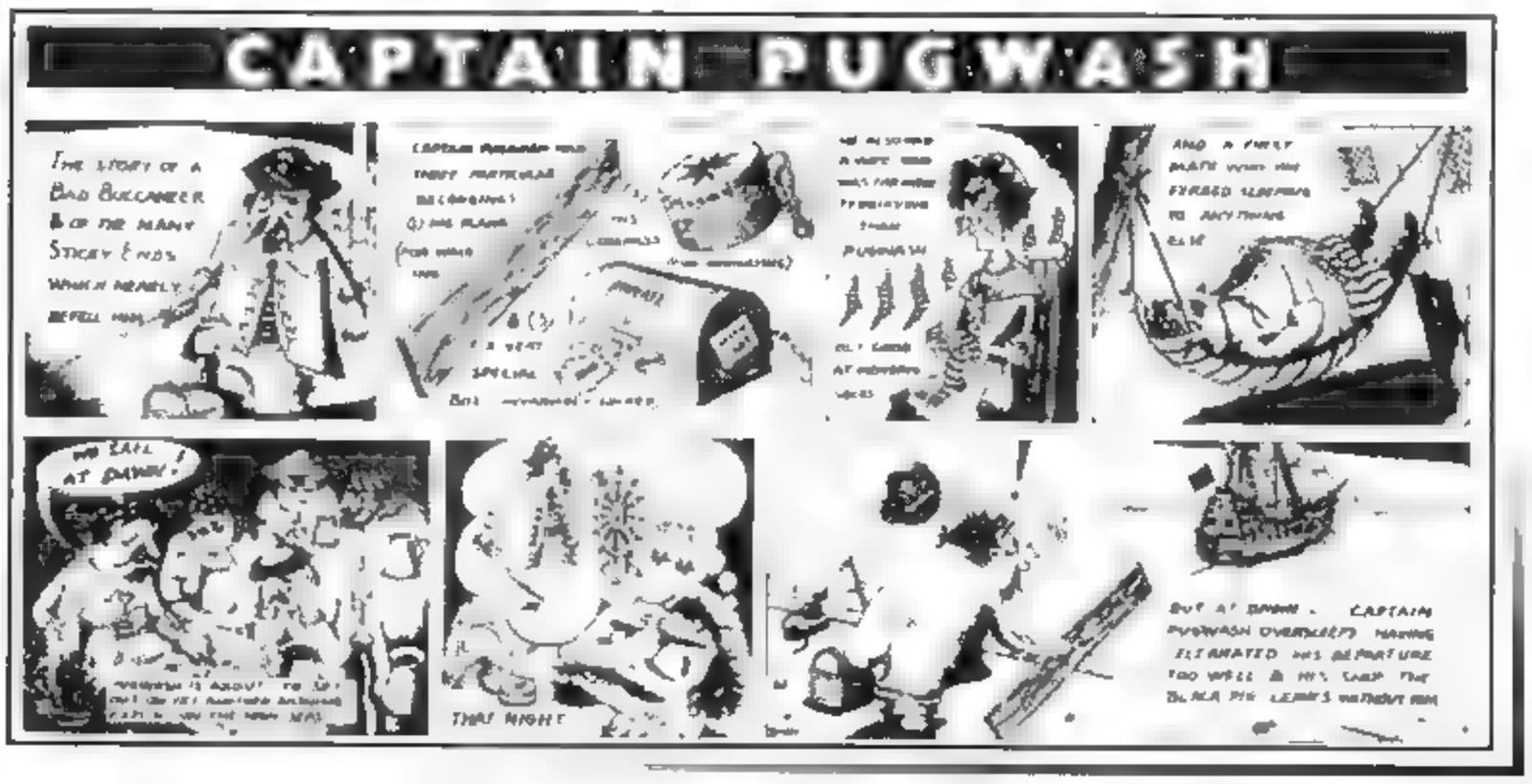
However, when the artwork is compared with what was eventually printed in *EAGLE* No. 1 [shown below right] a few subtle changes can be noted in frame 2 (the plank, compass and treasure chest are all different), in frame 4 (different windows) and in frame 7 (lettering different). The



main change though is in frame 1 where, as published, the introductory text was changed to being "The story of a bad buccaneer & of the many sticky ends which nearly befell him" from the punchier "Daredevil of the Deep" [see detail, below, left].

Even though the "Daredevil of the Deep" tagline makes him sound more Captain Jack Sparrow than Captain Pugwash, it seems unlikely that we would have seen Pugwash be any different from the captain we know and love today.

There's nowhere in the country where you can see original artwork from *EAGLE* No. 1, but in Rye Art Gallery you can go one better than that, by seeing artwork that predates, albeit slightly, the first *EAGLE*. ❑



PC 49 and the Case of the Missing Schoolbox

Adapted by James Howard

In the early fifties much of the rubble left by Hitler's air force when bombing London was being cleared away gradually. But many houses, once the pride and joy of their owners, still lay in piles of bricks, shattered wood and metal-work with the only occupants, pigeons. The children loved playing round these bomb sites because there was always the possibility of finding something that the rescue services had missed. A brooch, coins, toys and other little keep-sakes that once belonging to the unfortunate occupants.

Johnny Sabin was an eleven-year-old boy. He was small for his age with ginger hair and this caused him to be bullied at school but the youngster was no push-over as he would usually fight back. Johnny was a loner and one of his favourite haunts was the partially bombed-out street of Hickamon Terrace. Number 29 had one room that was still standing, although the walls had cracks in the plaster, as did the ceiling - but the door still worked. To the lad it was his den and he would climb up the damaged stairs and view all around him thinking he was the captain of a ship.

The one room had been used by many forms of life. The homeless, the destitute and the rats had at one time made a home there and the evidence of this was the rubbish that lay on the floor of the room.

One Saturday morning Johnny sat on an upturned rusty bucket in "his" room. He stared at the rubbish around him. Old tins, newspapers, old clothes, cigarette ends and rat droppings were all around him. But then his eyes saw something he hadn't seen before. At a clearing in the rubbish he saw some fresh wood chips on the floorboards. He knelt down and studied the floorboards. Several of them had been disturbed! No nails in four of them but they had been put back to look as if nothing was disturbed.

The lad took out his penknife and he lifted the floorboards. Underneath he found an old cardboard suitcase and pulled it out. When he opened it he had the surprise of his life. Pound notes, and big white five-pound notes were crammed inside.

For a while he sat on the bucket wondering what to do. Should he take the case to the police, take it to his parents, keep it, or put it back?

Johnny decided to take it home and keep it under some old fertiliser bags in the greenhouse. He wouldn't tell anyone.

He made his way home rather gingerly and hid the case in the service road behind their house. He went inside and found his mum preparing dinner in the kitchen.

"All right, Johnny?" she asked as she peeled potatoes.

"Yes thanks," came the worried reply.

His Dad was working overtime at the paint factory so if he took the case into the greenhouse via the back garden gate his mum wouldn't see him. Carefully, making as little noise as he could, the case was buried under the fertiliser bags and bits of compost in the greenhouse.

* * * * * * *

At Q Division headquarters, Inspector Wilson and Sergeant Wright were looking at three mug shots.

"This one is Douggie Swan, known as 'Swanny Boy', just out of prison He did five years for armed robbery pulled off just before the war ended with Charles 'Cherry' Picken and Berty O'Leary. Swan got a longer term as he shot a bank teller; didn't kill him but left him in a mess. The other two got lesser sentences as they just took the money," explained the D.I.

"The money was never found but now that Swan is out of prison the other two may be wanting a meeting with their old gang leader."

Just then, there was a knock on the door and, after being told to "Come in," Archie entered with a package.

"Sergeant Steele asked me to pop this in, Sir."

"Thanks, Fortynine," said Wilson. "Just a minute," he added, raising his finger.

"Have a look at these mug shots. Douggie Swan came out of prison three days ago and the other two members of his gang might just want a meeting with him to ask what happened to the swag before the war ended. He used to live with his elderly mother at 29, Hickamon Terrace but it took a doodle bomb late in the war, killing the old lady. Swan was out and lived to survey the damage."

"I'll be on the lookout, Sir," replied the constable.

* * * * * * *

On Monday morning Archie had stopped traffic on a pedestrian crossing to allow the schoolchildren to cross. Johnny Sabin was the last across. He wandered across looking as though he had no idea where he was or where he was going. The object in the greenhouse played on his mind.

"All right, Chum?" asked Archie, seeing the state the boy was in.

Johnny never answered, just wandering on.

* * * * * * *

In the Four Bells public house, Douggie Swan was taking a drink. He had to think. He had all that money, what should he do with it? Buy a house - he couldn't stay at his bombed-out house for much longer. And would "Cherry" Picken and Berty O'Leary show up? He had run off with the bank-haul, leaving the other two with nothing, and they wouldn't be well pleased as he had promised to share the spoils out later.

Just then Archie and Joan Carr walked into the lounge. Joan took a seat and Archie ordered drinks. Having settled down, Archie looked about. He then saw Swan across the bar in the public snug.

"My Sunday Helmet!" exclaimed Fortynine. "See that chap across the bar in the other room? Well, Wilson showed me his mug shot the other day. He's just out of prison."

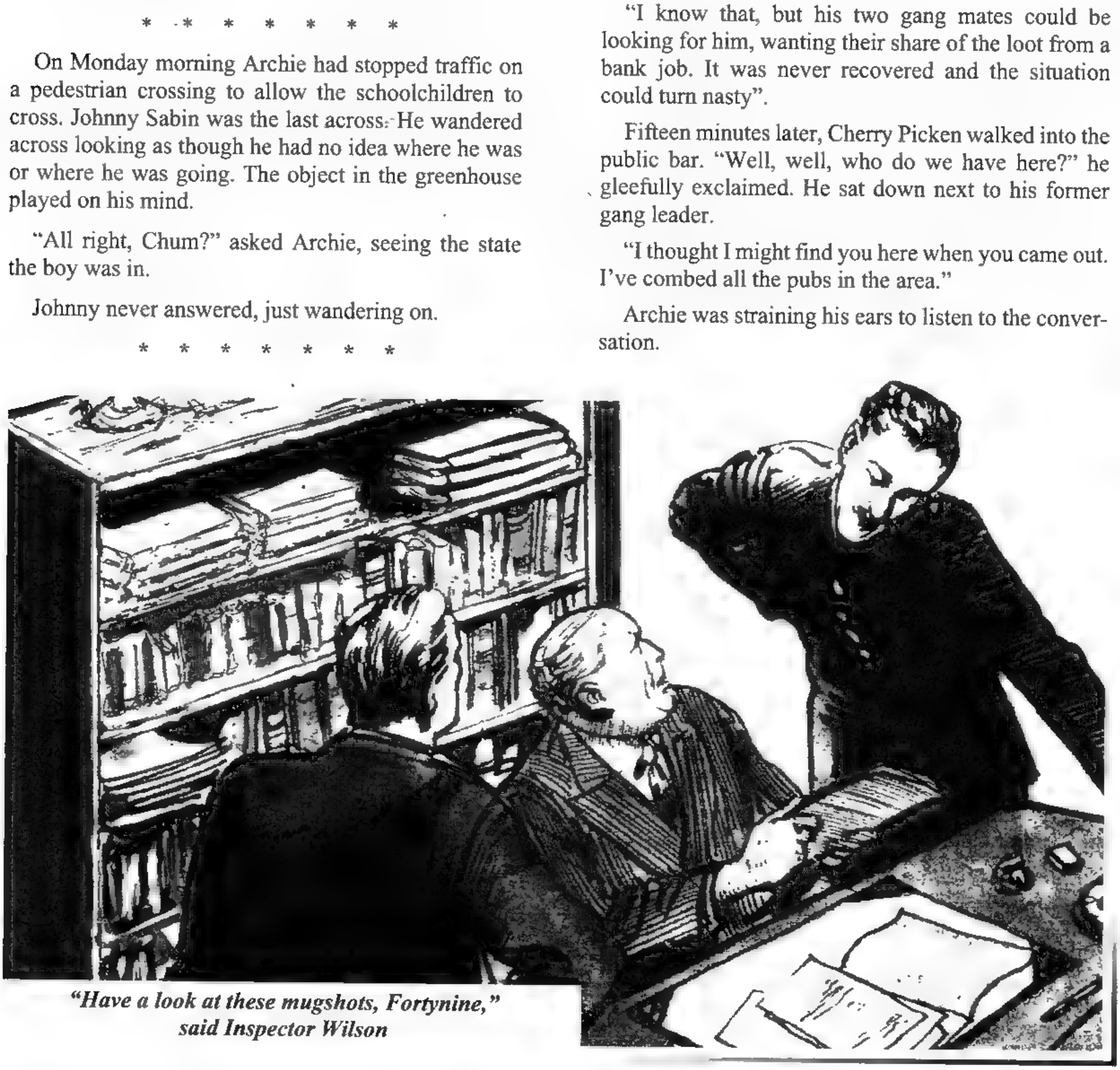
"Well, you can't do much about him if he's served his time," Joan came back.

"I know that, but his two gang mates could be looking for him, wanting their share of the loot from a bank job. It was never recovered and the situation could turn nasty".

Fifteen minutes later, Cherry Picken walked into the public bar. "Well, well, who do we have here?" he gleefully exclaimed. He sat down next to his former gang leader.

"I thought I might find you here when you came out. I've combed all the pubs in the area."

Archie was straining his ears to listen to the conversation.



"Have a look at these mugshots, Fortynine," said Inspector Wilson

"Where you living now?" asked Swan.

"I've got some lodgings in Henly Terrace," came the reply. "You?"

"I've been.dossing in my old house as a stopgap. It's bombed out but one room is still intact."

"Oh, very classy," retorted Cherry. "But enough of these niceties. What about the money?"

"I would have shared it out, but I'm not so sure about O'Leary. It was through him we got caught. The fool had to grab a handful of notes secretly from the bank job and spend them straight away. They got traced and bingo, that was us."

"Never mind O'Leary, I want my cut!"

Now in a corner, Swan said, "O.K. Come round to 29, Hickamon Terrace tomorrow afternoon when the pubs have shut. About 2.30. We'll have a sort out."

The two criminals talked away but Archie was not bothered about the following conversation. He must get back to H.Q. with this information.

* * * * * * *

At three thirty, Swan walked into 29, Hickamon Terrace. He sat down on the rusty bucket and lit a cigarette. As he exhaled he noticed the patch of floorboards didn't look right. He sprang to the floor, removing the floorboards. There was nothing there!

Swan was beside himself! Someone had stolen his loot! He cursed his luck, but just then he heard footsteps on the loose bricks outside his room. He hid behind the door.

Johnny Sabin walked into "his" room. Swan grabbed him, covering Johnny's mouth as he held the child tightly.

"What are you doing here, kid?" Swan asked in a gruff way.

"N-n-nothing", spluttered the lad when his mouth was free.

"Don't give me that, you little rat. What have you done to the floorboards?"

"N-n-nothing, Sir," mumbled Johnny, almost in tears.

"Come on", snarled the man. "If you don't tell me I might have to use this." He clenched his fist.

By now Johnny was terrified. He blurted out what he had done with the case of money.

"And where do you live?" asked the man. "34, Ashley Road," came the tear-filled reply. "Right," said Swan. "We must pay a visit to Ashley Road. But what are we going to do with you? You know too much."

Swan knew the truth behind this. He couldn't let the lad go to blather all his information.

"O.K., Sunny Jim. We are going on a trip".

Having grown up in the area, Swan knew it intimately. Not far away was a disused industrial estate. Many of the buildings had taken bombs during the war but an old tile factory still remained.

An evil idea came to Swan. Take the kid to the top of the tower at the end of the tile factory and push him out. It would look as though he had fallen out whilst playing. Great idea!

"Right kid, get walking. I will be behind you with a fist in my pocket so don't try anything silly."

The couple walked out over the rubble and reached the pavement to start their walk.

* * * * * * *

Archie, still off duty, ran into his police station with Joan. "I must see D.I. Wilson," he told the desk Sergeant. "I've got some important information about a bank robbery."

"O.K., Fortynine. I'll see if I can contact him." He grasped the phone.

Much against his better judgment, Wilson let Archie have an audience.

"It's about Douggie Swan, Sir. He and Cherry Picken are meeting up at 29, Hickamon Terrace tomorrow afternoon at 2.30 to split up the loot from their bank job. We overheard a conversation between them in the Four Bells this afternoon."

"Are you sure they were Swan and Picken?" asked Wilson.

"Show Miss Carr the mugshots, Sir," suggested Archie.

Wilson turned on his swivel chair and pulled them from the filing cabinet. He showed them to Joan.

"That's the two," agreed Joan.

"Right, Fortynine. You'll be on duty tomorrow afternoon. You can come on the operation in plain clothes and see if we can retrieve this money. Wright, can you set this up, please."

"Certainly, Sir," came the answer.

* * * * * * *

Meanwhile, Swan and Johnny had reached the tile factory. "Get inside kid," said Swan, pushing Johnny in the back.

The couple walked into the dark, evil-smelling brick building. Tile dust and old bits of tile were everywhere. They walked along what was once the factory and came to the entrance to the tower.

Once again the lad was pushed through the door. The tower had circular steps leading up to a platform at the top.

"O.K., kid. Get walking up them steps," came the gruff command.

With great care, as the steps were well worn, the couple made their way to the platform at the top of the tower.

"Right, kid. I'm going to tie you up and leave you here while I pay a call on your parents' home. If I find the case is not there and you have lied, I will be back for some more chit-chat."

And that was how Swan left the eleven-year-old; tears in his eyes and wondering about his fate.

* * * * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Sabin were very worried. Johnny had not returned from school! It was six o'clock and no sign of him. They went round to the homes of his school mates, who all said they had seen Johnny leaving school.

At seven o'clock they phoned the police. A W.P.C. was sent round immediately and took details. She reported back to H.Q., an "all cars" alert was sent out, and as many officers as possible were contacted. A missing child always had a priority at the station. The WPC was sent back to the Sabin household to comfort the parents.

* * * * * * *

When it was dark that evening Swan paid a visit to Johnny's home. He used the service road at the back of the house but was bitterly disappointed to see a WPC in the kitchen. Not knowing how many police were in the house, Swan cursed his luck and went for a drink.

* * * * * * *

"What are you doing here, kid?" asked a gruff voice.

Throughout the night and the next day, the police were looking for Johnny Sabin, but no news was forthcoming. At 8 a.m. two police loudspeaker vans drove around the area asking for news of the boy. They targeted school areas or places thick with rush hour people.

"This is a police message about a missing schoolboy. Johnny Sabin, an eleven-year-old boy went missing yesterday afternoon. He is three foot eleven inches tall and was wearing a blue windcheater, grey short trousers, grey socks and black shoes. Please check your sheds, outhouses or other places the boy could be. If you have any information please contact your nearest police station."

Meanwhile, Sergeant Wright was setting up for the siege on 29, Hickamon Terrace.

"All set up, Sir. You and I, with Fortynine and two other officers, ready for the fray" he told the D.I.

"I hope it's not a wild-goose chase," grunted Wilson.

"Or a wild Swan chase," chuckled Wright.

* * * * * * *

At twelve minutes past two and a good distance away from 29, Hickamon Terrace, an unmarked police car with five plain-clothed police officers within, stood waiting. Ten minutes later Cherry Picken turned into Hickamon Terrace.

He stopped. His criminal nose smelt a rat. "Five men in a car in the middle of the day. They look like coppers!" He did a quick about-turn.

At four o'clock the five police officers were still in the car, whose windows were by now steamed up.

Wilson had had enough. "Well, we could sit here for ever and there will still be no action," he angrily shouted. "You officers go and have a look round, but I don't think you'll find anything."

The D.I. was correct. They found nothing.

"What a waste! We should be looking for that missing boy instead of sitting here like a lot of spare parts. Back to the station!"

They drove back with Archie wishing the floor would open up and swallow him.

* * * * * * *

That afternoon, Joan left work at five minutes past five. She walked along the street intending to buy some bits from the small grocer's shop. As she walked in, two schoolboys were being served by the shopkeeper at the sweet counter.

"You got anyfing for a penny, mister?" asked the taller of the two boys.

"Not a lot and nothing at all if you've got no coupons", came the answer. The boys dawdled and the

shopkeeper said, "While you boys make up your minds, I will serve this lady."

Joan stood behind the customer in front of her, thinking of the missing schoolboy. While she waited she overheard some amazing conversation from the boys.

"You hear the police van talking about Johnny Sebin - Servin - or whatever his name was, this morning?"

"Yes I did. He was above us in the top class at school. But I fink I saw him walking with a man into the old factories in Park Road yesterday after school."

Joan moved in. "Excuse me, boys, but did you say you saw Johnny Sabin walking with a man yesterday afternoon?"

Somewhat taken aback, the younger of the two lads said "Er - yes, Miss. I fink it was him."

"Now look. A little boy's life is in danger, so if you are correct it might help save him."

"I fink it was him, Miss," repeated the boy. "They wus going into the old factory place on Park Road."

"Well, thank you very much," said a jubilant Joan. "Now I've got some coupons with me, let me buy you some sweets."

The two boys made their selection, still staggered by their good fortune, and Joan paid for her shopping. Saying goodbye to the shopkeeper and the two boys she made her way down the street to the nearest phone box.

She knew Wilson's phone number off by heart - she had used it so much in the past.

* * * * * * *

Later, at H.Q., Sergeant Wright was briefing five constables who were to search the old Trading estate in Park Road.

"Right, men. We have received information that the missing schoolboy, Johnny Sabin, was seen going into the derelict factory site on Park Road. We want a thorough search, but no heroics. A boy's life might be at stake. Any questions?"

No-one had, and so the policemen, including Forty-nine, piled into the police van and made their way to the derelict site. On arrival, the men spilt up and set about the search.

At the top of the tower, Swan looked out of the broken window. "The cops!" he bellowed. Quick as a flash, Swan made for the stairs and descended in record time. He shot out the back door and started to run in the opposite direction to which the police had arrived. He leapt through all the rubbish and over the broken-down high wall.

Fortynine spotted him and gave chase. So intent was he on catching the fugitive that Archie missed his footing and became entangled in some rusty coils of wire.

"Over here!" he shouted to his colleagues, but it was too late. Swan was gone.

A very frightened Johnny Sabin was discovered and rescued from the tower and sent to hospital for a check-up. His parents were informed and made straight for his bedside.

* * * * * * *

Relieved to have outrun the police, Swan lay low and at nine o'clock made for the Four Bells and quenched his thirst with a pint of bitter. While Swan was sorting out his next move, Cherry Picken walked in.

"Oh, glad I found you Swanny Boy. I suppose you sussed out the cops outside your place as I did this afternoon?"

Relieved that Cherry had given him an excuse, Swan agreed.

Cherry bought a drink and Swan told him about the boy in the tower. He left much out but, in the belief that the money case was in the disused tile factory, Picken agreed to go with Swan.

Checking that the police had left the area they lost no time and climbed up the spiral staircase, but found the platform at the top of the tower deserted.

"Hey, where's the money and where's the kid?" asked a suspicious Cherry.

"It's here!" said Swan, swinging a fist at Cherry's jaw. Regaining his posture, Picken lashed out at Swan, causing him to hit the floor on his back.

Cherry launched at the figure on the floor but Swan saw him coming, bent his knees, caught Picken right in the stomach with his two feet and launched his foe clean out of the broken window in a perfect lever stroke.

After a sickening scream, Cherry hit the concrete, the last thing he ever saw. Swan breathed a sigh of relief, and decided to visit 34, Ashley Road again.

Having got there, he was delighted to find the house in darkness. Over the back fence, into the greenhouse and there, behind the fertiliser bags, was his case.

Jubilant, he left the premises just as the Sabins were returning from hospital with their son. Fortynine accompanied Sergeant Wright and the family with instructions to retrieve the case of money. But Archie found nothing among the greenhouse items except for evidence that someone had got there before them.

"I'll bet my pension that Swan's been here," said the Sergeant swinging his head. "Back to the station."

* * * * * * *

Swan made his way back to the Four Bells for a nightcap before he retired to 29, Hickamon Terrace. He chose the lounge, thinking that a gentleman with a case would not be out of place in there.

But across in the bar, he was noticed by a seedy character as he bought another drink. Having drunk it, the stranger walked out. With "Last orders please" over, Swan walked out also. At the edge of the car park a voice said "Hello, there, Swanny Boy!"

Swan turned into the shadows and saw Berty O'Leary.

"Now tell me. What would you be having in that there case, I wonder?" he sarcastically inquired.

"Nothing for you!" came the reply and Swan swung out his fist, after putting the case down. Both men swung punches as the dust flew in the car park.

Just then Fortynine was walking back to the station to sign off. He had had a poor day.

"I don't know. What a day. A rocket from Wilson about the false alarm at Hickamon Terrace, letting Swan escape by fouling up in coiled wire and then finding the money still missing. Hey-Ho."

Passing by the entrance to The Four Bells car park, he heard sounds of a fight going on. He walked in and saw the two men fighting. "All right. All right. Break it up", said Archie, wading in.

The sight of a policeman was abhorrent to the two criminals, so they both set about him, but Fortynine was fresh, whereas the other two both had stinging heads from their fight together.

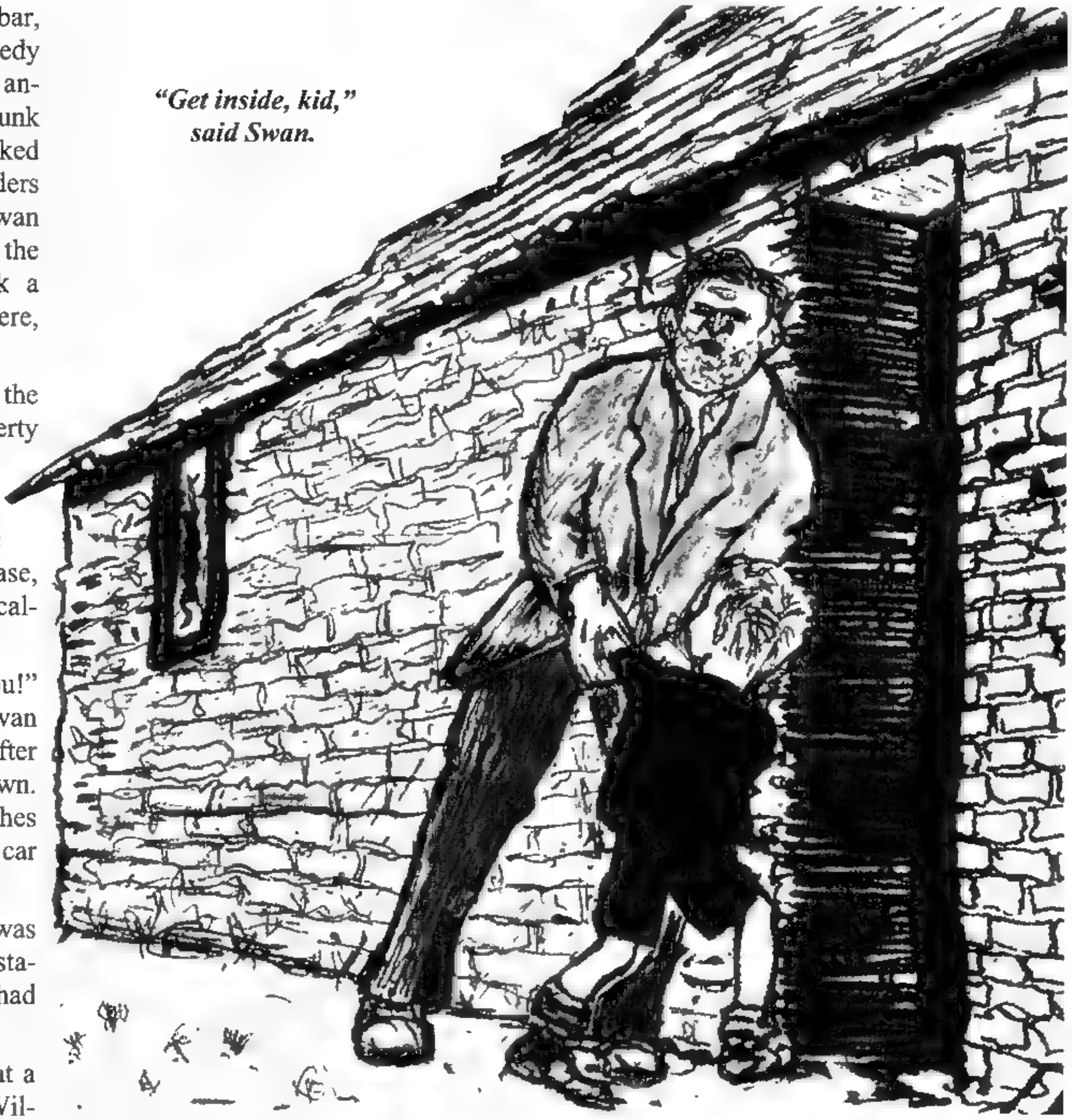
Archie soon had them submitting and the landlord had come out to see what was happening.

"Can I use your phone, landlord?" asked Archie.

Shortly, a police car arrived carrying Wilson and Wright."You all right, Fortynine?" asked the Sergeant.

"A bit bruised, Sarge," came the reply.

"Get yourself back to the station and get checked out by the doctor" ordered Wilson. "We've got these two for kidnap and maybe murder. There's another car coming. I'll send you straight back in it."



"Get inside, kid," said Swan.

"Thanks very much, Sir," replied a weary Archie. "Good evening, all," he muttered.

* * * * * * *

Two days later, Joan and Archie were discussing the case with D.I. Wilson and Sergeant Wright.

"It was thanks to you, Miss Carr, that we discovered that lad in the tower. So, many thanks," beamed Wilson.

"Yes, the outcome could have been very much different for that lad," chipped in Wright.

"By way of thanks, could you do a small job for me, Archie?" asked Joan.

"Anything for you, my love," smiled Archie.

"Tile a small area of the bathroom now I've redecorated?"

Archie's smile disappeared. He screwed up his nose and moustache.

"Could it wait a few weeks, Joan? I've had enough of tiles lately!" Wilson and Wright could only smile as Archie took Joan's arm.

"Would you excuse us, Sir? Good evening all!" ❑

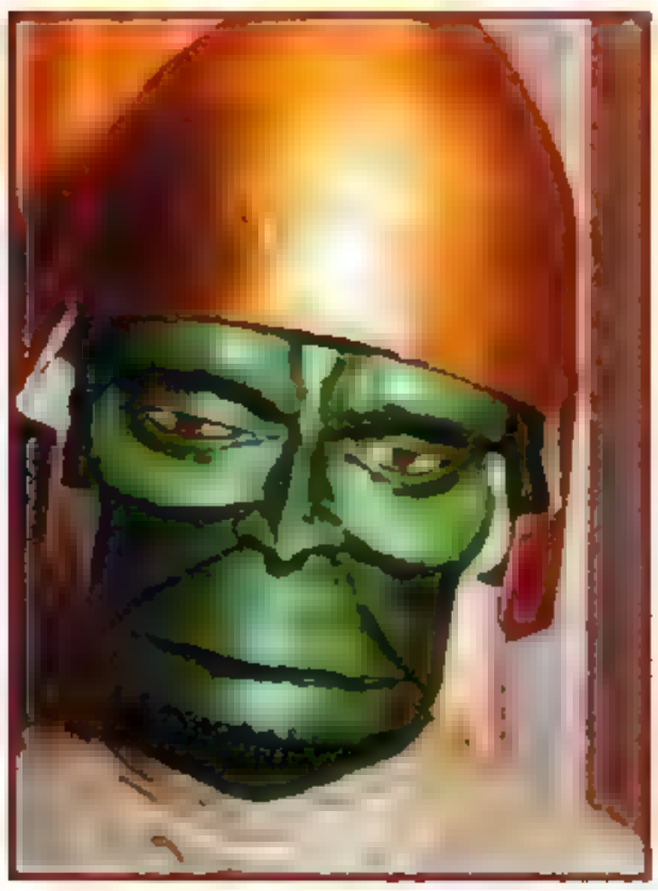
EAGLECON 80

Visual Memories of the only London convention ever held solely for *EAGLE* enthusiasts

by Adrian Perkins

Part 2, People

This is one-of-three, four-page articles provided from my private collection of photographs taken at the event. These images stir very powerful memories within me and my hope is that they will also serve to fill gaps in your knowledge of the genealogy of our hobby. ❑



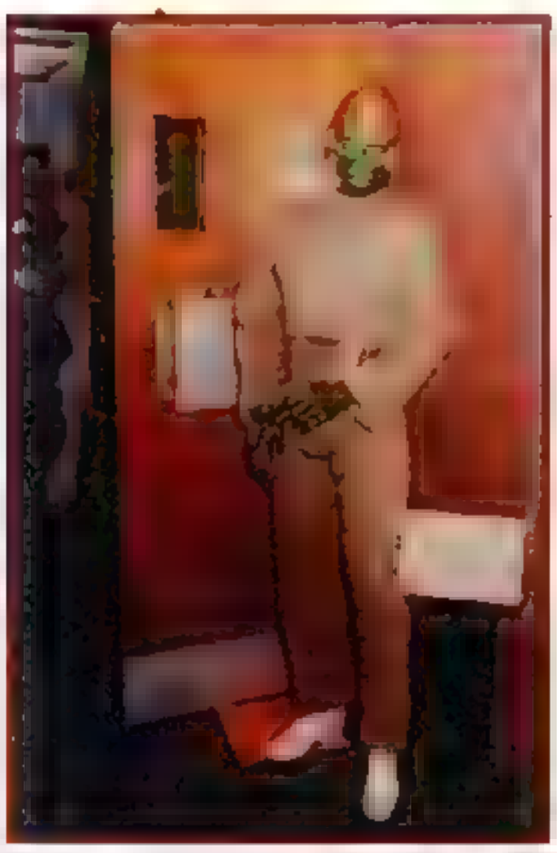
A close-up of the menacing doorman.

Marcus Morris welcomed attendees to the EAGLE Convention. Although he was meant to be on stage with some of the other organisers, Frank Hampson preferred to sit in the audience.

Above, l to r: Simon Garrett, Roger Coombes, the author and Roger Bayliss – just out of picture is Alan Vince, who is shown in the photo left.

I chatted with Macdonald Hastings as his interviewer, Andrew Coffey, prepared to engage him in a rather more formal talk. For the record, Mac - ever the professional interviewer - thoroughly quizzed Andrew!!

I kicked the event off with a brief announcement about the Astral Group as organisers and presented the Convention's main publication. We had quite a crowd watching us.



Frank brought this fellow to be the doorman to his "studio". Frank allowed us to auction it on the Sunday afternoon. An enthusiast from Belfast won it - he had considerable problems with the Customs there. Parts of a green man turning up at an airport desk caused the Police to be called!!

Marcus Morris, the co-founder of EAGLE in 1950, attended on the first day, thus providing us with a real living link to our favourite magazine.

L to r: Alan Vince, the author, Bruce Porteous, John and Jill Woodland trying to sort out some insurance problems raised by the Convention's displays.

L to r: Mike Brown, Simon Garrett, Roger Coombes, John and Jill Cridland, the author, and Bruce Porteus. Alan Vince was behind the camera.

Alan Vince, Keith Page and Roger Bayliss pictured just after our first planning meeting. Still on good terms!

L to r: the author, Keith, Simon Garrett, Jill and John Woodland, Alan Vince. After our first planning meeting we were able to closely examine Keith Page's artwork - his take on a Hampson-like character sheet guide for the artists.

Keith Page is pictured (in part!) with Rod Barzilay

Alan Whitehead in conversation with the event's official photographer Cedric Sloan.

Simon Garrett and Roger Coombes discuss a Convention publication with Chad Varah

Frank Hampson, co-founder and creator of 'Dan Dare' besieged by fans in his "Studio" at the event. He later commented how much he had enjoyed the experience as he was reliving the early 1950s once more ...

With Frank and Dan Dare are (l to r): John Woodland, Bruce Porteous, Andrew Skilleter. David Gould is just in the picture!

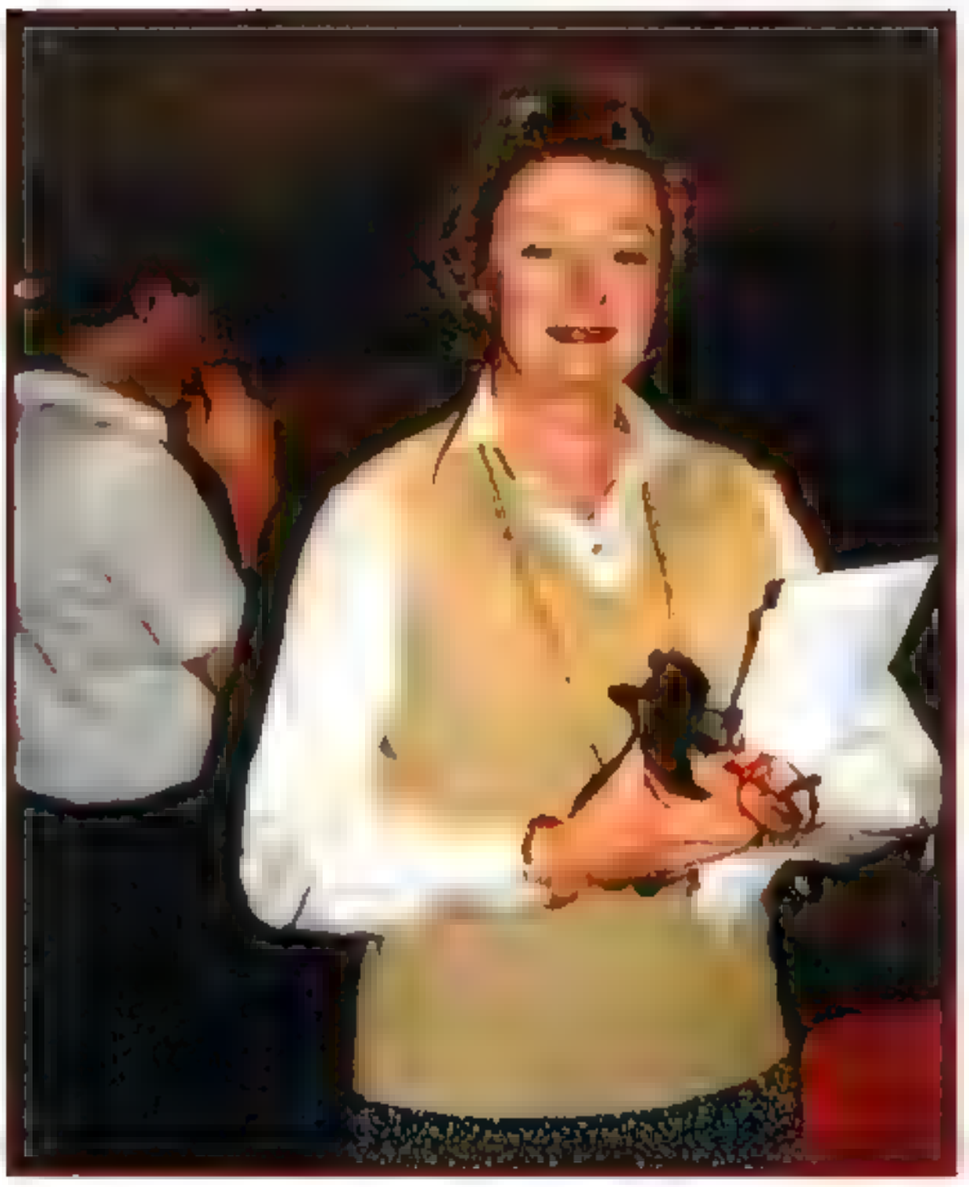
Enthusiasts from the US and Britain chat with Frank at Friday evening's 'Wine and Cheese Speakeasy'.

Frank chats to Greta in his "studio". They hadn't met for years ...

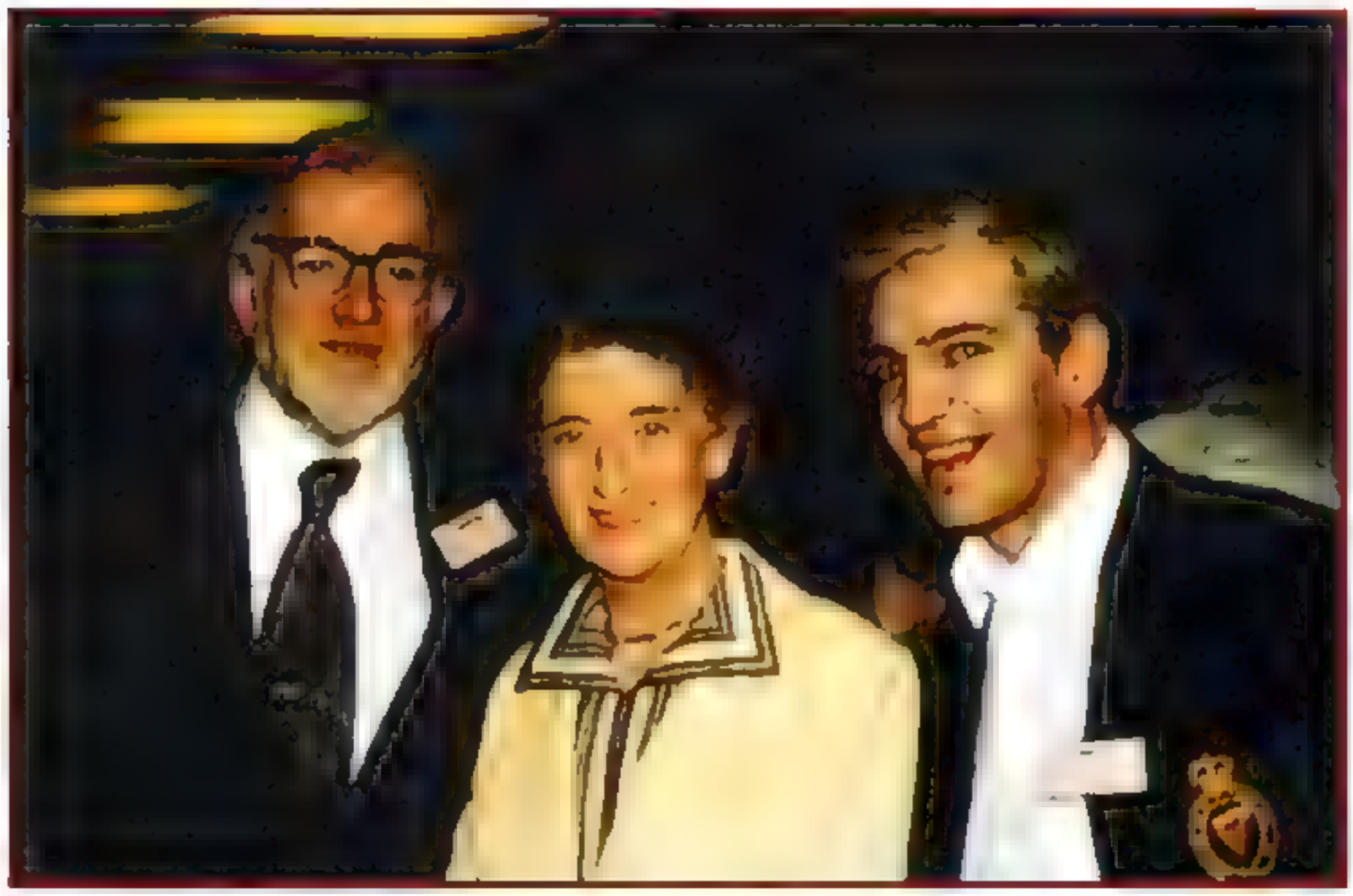
Frank autographs an early EAGLE issue in his "studio" at the Convention. David Gould looks on enviously!

Art School lecturer Alan Whitehead instructs pupil Frank Hampson!

The Astral Group Newsletter editors Charles Gunther and Alan Whitehead.



Greta Tomlinson was one of the event's guests



Frank and Dorothy with Cedric Sloan in Frank's "Studio"

Frank and Our EAGLE Special Investigator (Macdonald Hastings) in discussion in a corner of Frank's "studio" at the Convention. Note the model of the Dan Dare spaceship, adapted to be the St Christopher rescue craft, featured in 'Operation Saturn'.

Frank's hands, that he used some 30 years previously to create 'Dan Dare', quietly enjoying a deserved rest from holding a paint brush!

Yours truly, taking time out to enjoy a necessary break

Charles Gunther, Frank and Dorothy Hampson outside the Y Hotel

Next time in Part 3, 'Presentations and Interviews', we look at some of the ways EAGLECON 80 communicated, both to those present and, to a wider audience.

ONLY DIGBY WAS A MORE COMMITTED FOLLOWER

A personal tribute to Geoff Provins, who died in July last year

by Alastair Crompton

I know of no Frank Hampson/'Dan Dare' follower more ardent, enthusiastic or sincere than Geoff Provins, shown here (left) at Chris Beetles' art gallery in St. James, London, at the launch of my book *Tomorrow Revisited* in November, 2010.

This was the last time I saw Geoff, and was impressed by the efforts he'd made to come to London, through a snowstorm, and through crowds of students, demonstrating against the rise in their University fees. As well as the blizzard and the howling agitators (sadly, there were a few) the Metropolitan Police did their usual best to be as obstructive and unhelpful as possible. Yet Geoff was there, ready with a firm handshake, happy to see his *Eagle Society* friends, of which there were a round dozen. He was one of the last of the visitors to leave, in awe (as we all were) by the sheets of 'Venus' artwork that decked the gallery walls.

Ever since my first book, Geoff kept up a regular correspondence. He was more vociferous than anyone about how useful it would be to bring out a second, revised biography, even in the days when I didn't think this would be possible. He wrote of rumours he'd heard about Frank, Dan and *EAGLE*, asking if I knew the truth about them (I didn't) and always hoping Hampson's memory would be properly honoured. Each Christmas I got a letter touching on his life, and replied with my own news, plus cuttings, print-outs, copies of original art and gossip I'd picked up from other DD fans. Geoff was always positive, keen to be part of the *Society*, grateful to the members who gave him their time, never with a harsh or critical word to say about any of us.

His letters came about every three months and were sometimes accompanied by phone calls. I had only just begun to think I hadn't heard from him recently, when I heard he had died. I was remiss here; I should have woken up to the missing contact months before. Geoff was loyal, persistent and affable, I liked his conviviality and keenness to talk. I'm sure I speak for all when I say he will be sadly missed.

Alastair Crompton, November 2011 ❑

The *Eagle* Cutaways of A. Bruce Cornwell

by Jeremy Briggs

One of the staples of *EAGLE* over its nineteen years was the Cutaway. These fascinating and educational illustrations weathered the changes to the comic throughout the 1950s and 1960s, running with few gaps from an electric train in the first issue to a truck in the penultimate issue. Both these cutaways were illustrated by Leslie Ashwell Wood who was by far the most prolific cutaway artist *EAGLE* had, contributing almost two thirds of the near 960 cutaways published in the weekly title.

While not all the cutaways are signed and therefore attributable to a specific artist, there were at least 23 artists other than Wood who contributed cutaways, from the familiar names of J. Walkden Fisher with 59, Lawrence Dunn with 48, plus Geoffrey Wheeler and John Batchelor with 44 each, to the less familiar names of Brian Watson, T. C. Renwick-Adams and Alan Crisp who provided one each. One familiar name not normally associated with the *EAGLE* cutaways is 'Dan Dare' artist A. Bruce Cornwell.

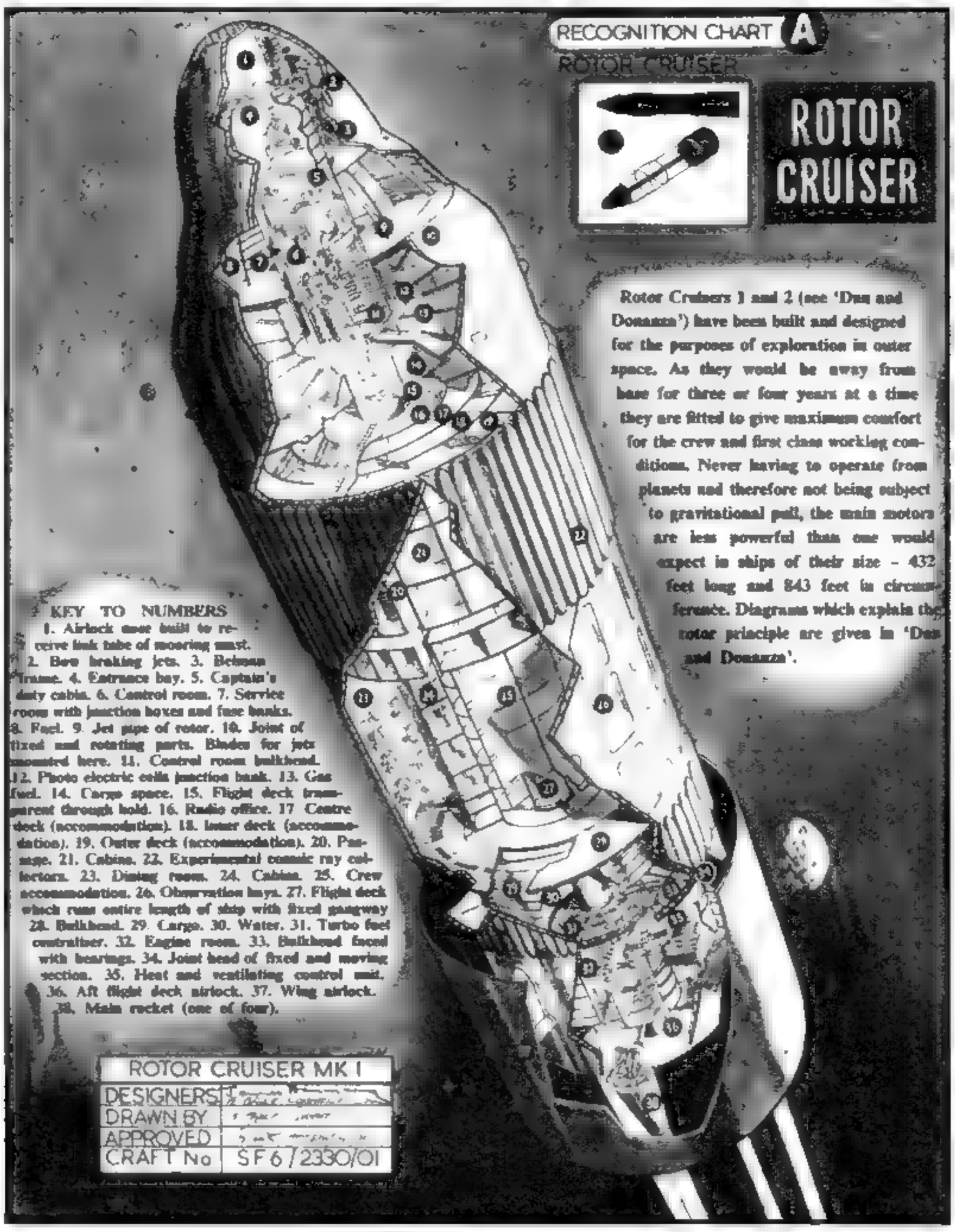
Bruce Cornwell's earliest published *EAGLE* cutaways were of the Rotor Cruiser and the Theron Duty Cutter for the 1953 *Dan Dare Spacebook*, not done in the coloured half centrespread style of the comic at the time but as highly detailed full page black and white images in keeping with the rest of the *Spacebook*. Ten years later he would also draw several more simplified cutaways as part of larger articles in the 1963 *Dan Dare Space Annual* with one, the Faroe Jet, signed with his A.B.C. initials.

None of these black and white cutaways were in the style of those that the weekly comic was known for. However he did paint four colour cutaways for the weekly *EAGLE* and, perhaps unsurprising for a former merchant seaman, they were all of ships. Bruce remembers that "the subjects were all chosen by the editor, but I always wrote the text and key." As to whether the amount of detail in the illustrations required him to increase the size of his original artwork he recalls, "sometimes it was half up or one up but never any larger."

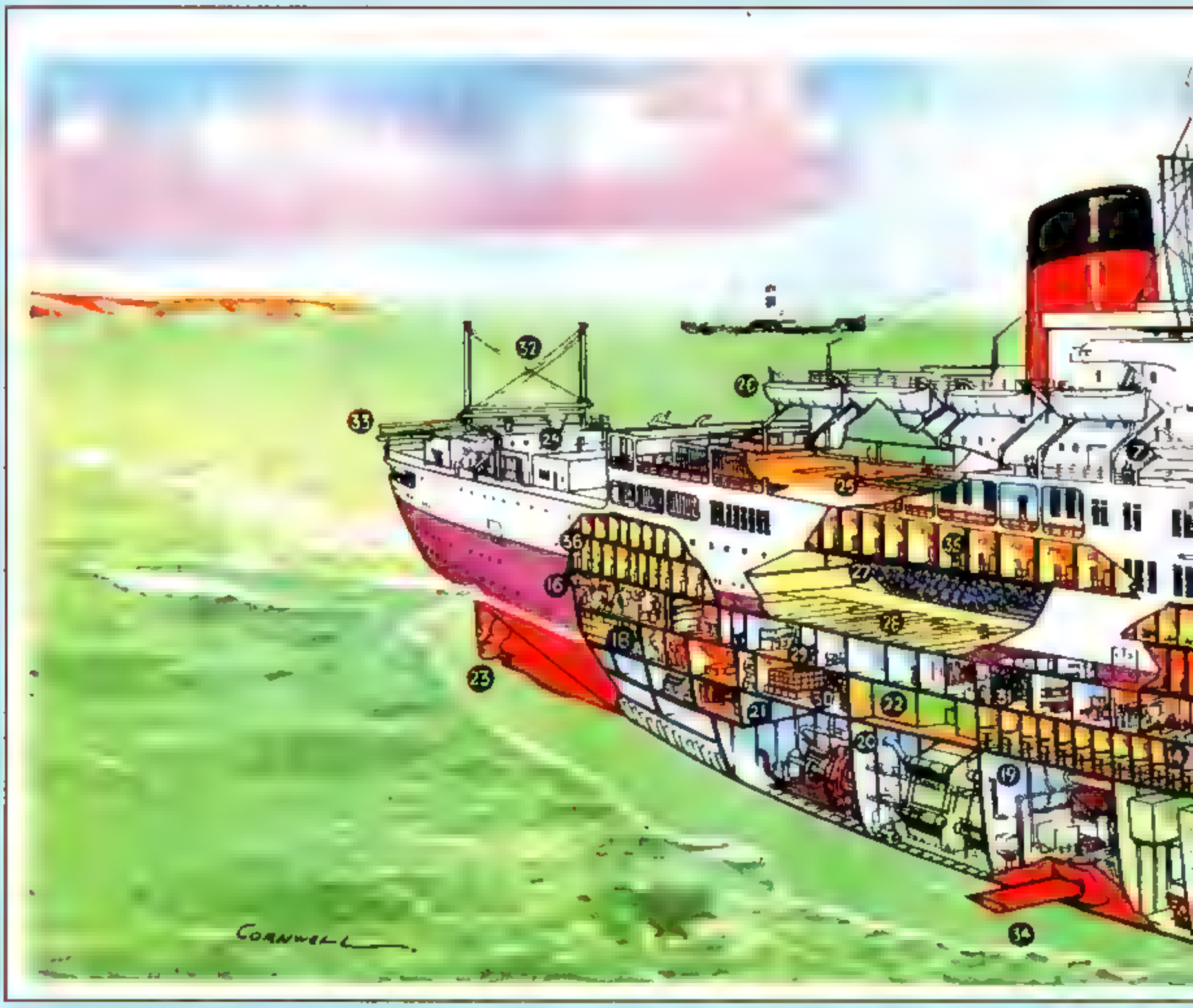
The first of these colour cutaways appeared in *EAGLE* Vol. 11 No. 37 (10th September, 1960) and showed the passenger/cargo ship, *RMS Windsor Castle*, which was then used by its owners, Union Castle Line, to sail between England and South Africa. The ship had a relatively tall superstructure and funnel in comparison to its length and to help overcome this within the confines of the requirement for a long, narrow illustration, he buried the lower bow well into the sea and effectively off the page to allow more room for the height required.

In Vol. 12 No. 4 (28th January, 1961), at a time before communications satellites, H.M. telegraph ship *Monarch*, operated by the state run General Post Office, provided the means of worldwide communication by laying undersea cables. When asked if he had ever had the chance to see or visit any of the cutaway subjects before he began his work, Bruce remembers, "only *Monarch*, I went on board when she was up the Thames loading cable. The design department were very helpful in supplying me with a roll of blueprints."

Asked what the response, if any, there was to his cutaways in the comic, he recalls, "When *EAGLE* published the *Monarch* work the GPO contacted me to produce another cutaway for them. Of course it was a different angle, but with the same detail. They wanted to send it to schools who were always requesting details."


RECOGNITION CHART A
ROTOR CRUISER
ROTOR CRUISER
Rotor Cruisers 1 and 2 (see 'Dan and Donanza') have been built and designed for the purposes of exploration in outer space. As they would be away from base for three or four years at a time they are fitted to give maximum comfort for the crew and first class working conditions. Never having to operate from planets and therefore not being subject to gravitational pull, the main motors are less powerful than one would expect in ships of their size - 432 feet long and 843 feet in circumference. Diagrams which explain the rotor principle are given in 'Dan and Donanza'.
KEY TO NUMBERS
1. Airlock door built to receive link tube of mooring mast. 2. Bow braking jets. 3. Bulkhead frame. 4. Entrance bay. 5. Captain's duty cabin. 6. Control room. 7. Service room with junction boxes and fuse banks. 8. Fuel. 9. Jet pipe of rotor. 10. Joint of fixed and rotating parts. Blades for jets mounted here. 11. Control room bulkhead. 12. Photo electric cells junction bank. 13. Gas fuel. 14. Cargo space. 15. Flight deck transparent through hold. 16. Radio office. 17. Centre deck (accommodation). 18. Inner deck (accommodation). 19. Outer deck (accommodation). 20. Passage. 21. Cabins. 22. Experimental cosmic ray collectors. 23. Dining room. 24. Cabins. 25. Crew accommodation. 26. Observation bays. 27. Flight deck which runs entire length of ship with fixed gangway 28. Bulkhead. 29. Cargo. 30. Water. 31. Turbo fuel centrifuge. 32. Engine room. 33. Bulkhead faced with bearings. 34. Joint head of fixed and moving section. 35. Heat and ventilating control unit. 36. Aft flight deck airlock. 37. Wing airlock. 38. Main rocket (one of four).
ROTOR CRUISER MK I
DESIGNERS
DRAWN BY
APPROVED
CRAFT No SF 6/2330/01

EAGLE Cutaways by A. Bruce Cornwell



THE MONARCH

H.M. telegraph ship *Monarch* was built in 1945, and is the largest vessel of her kind, with a speed of 17 knots. The job of maintaining many thousands of miles of telegraph cable is a never-ending task, requiring great skill. The *Monarch* can carry approximately 2,000 miles of deep-sea cable, and is able to remain at sea for three months at a time, manned by 134 men. This ship, of 8,056 gross tons, has laid cable in many parts of the world.

THE WINDSOR CASTLE

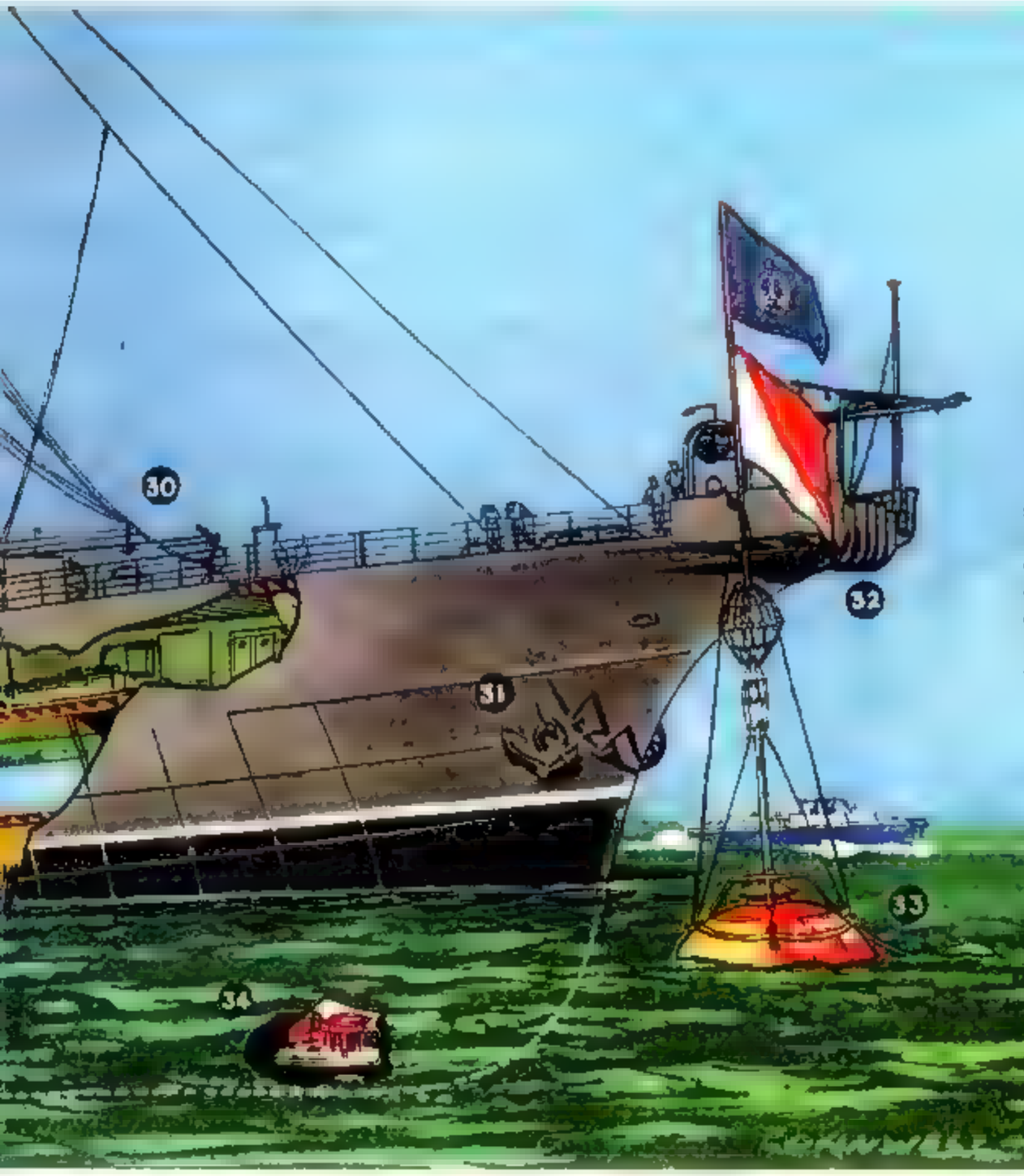
Latest of the Union Castle fleet, the *Windsor Castle* is the largest passenger liner built in Britain for 22 years, and affords passengers the height of luxury and safety. She was built for the Britain to South Africa run, and is the largest mail-ship ever to use this route.

The gross tonnage is about 38,000 tons, with an overall length of 783 ft. and a 92-ft. beam. Cargo space adds up to 623,000 cubic feet, over half of which is refrigerated for the purpose of carrying perishable South African cargo.

The crew numbers about 470; passenger capacity can be either 250 first class and 600 tourist, or 360 first class and 700 tourist.

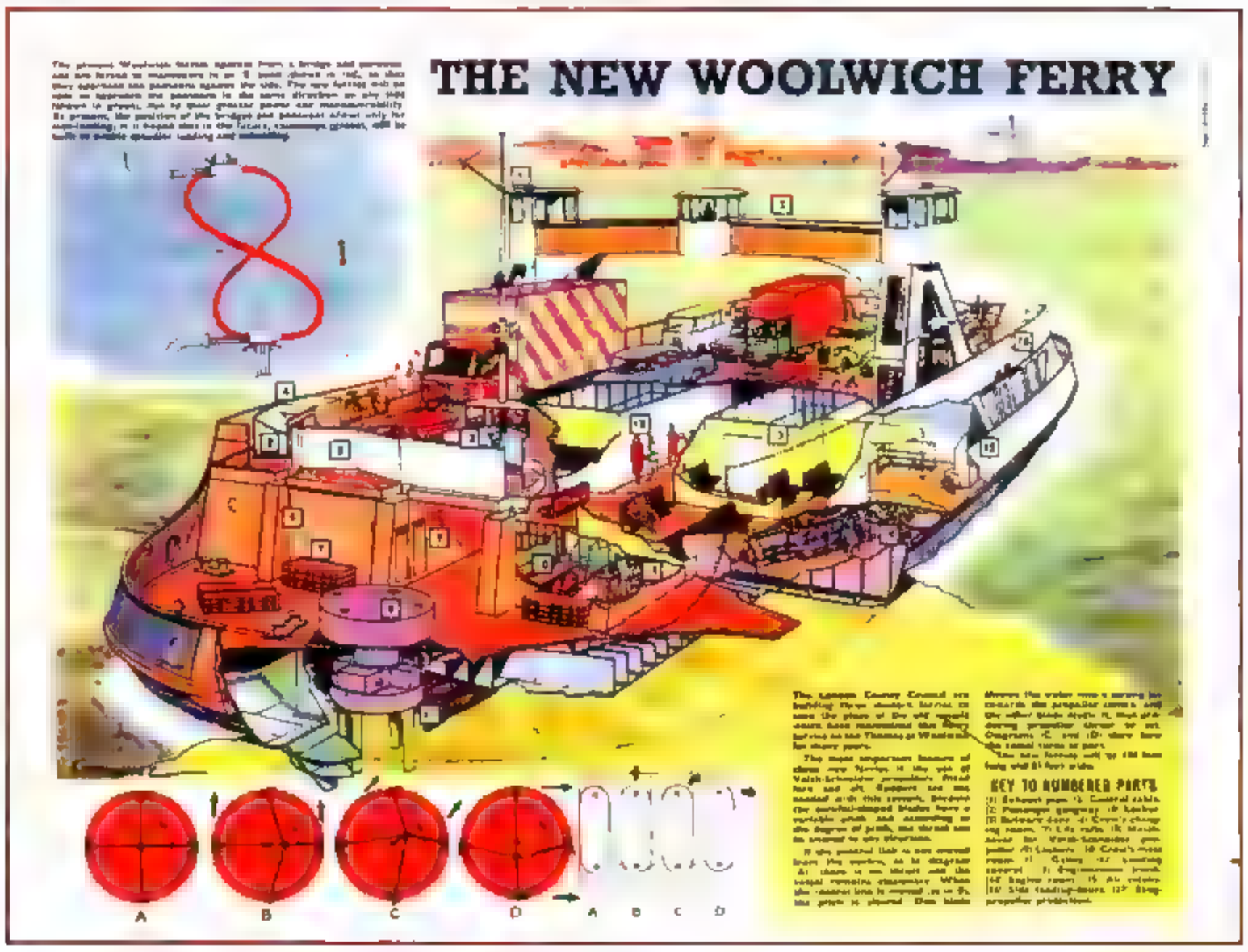
KEY TO NUMBERED PARTS

(1) Radar scanner. (2) Crow's-nest. (3) Bridge. (4) Captain's cabin. (5) First-class sun-deck. (6) Officers' accommodation. (7) Boat-deck. (8) First-class Lounge. (9) Tourist sun-deck. (10) Garage. (11) Two-car crane. (12) Crew's promenade. (13) First-class accommodation. (14) Stewards' accommodation. (15) First-class dining-saloon. (16) Tourist dining-saloon. (17) Fuel tanks. (18) Cargo. (19) Auxiliary engine-room. (20) Boiler-room. (21) Engine-room. (22) Water tanks. (23) Starboard propeller. (24) Tourist swimming-pool. (25) First-class swimming-pool. (26) Lifeboat, to carry 146 people. (27) Cinema. (28) Starboard first-class cabins, cut away to show cinema. (29) Kitchen. (30) Beer-store. (31) Wine-store. (32) Twin derrick-posts, with derricks stowed. (33) Stern docking-bridge. (34) Denny-Brown stabilizing fin, fitted to both port and starboard sides of the hull. (35) First-class accommodation. (36) Tourist accommodation.



KEY TO NUMBERED PARTS

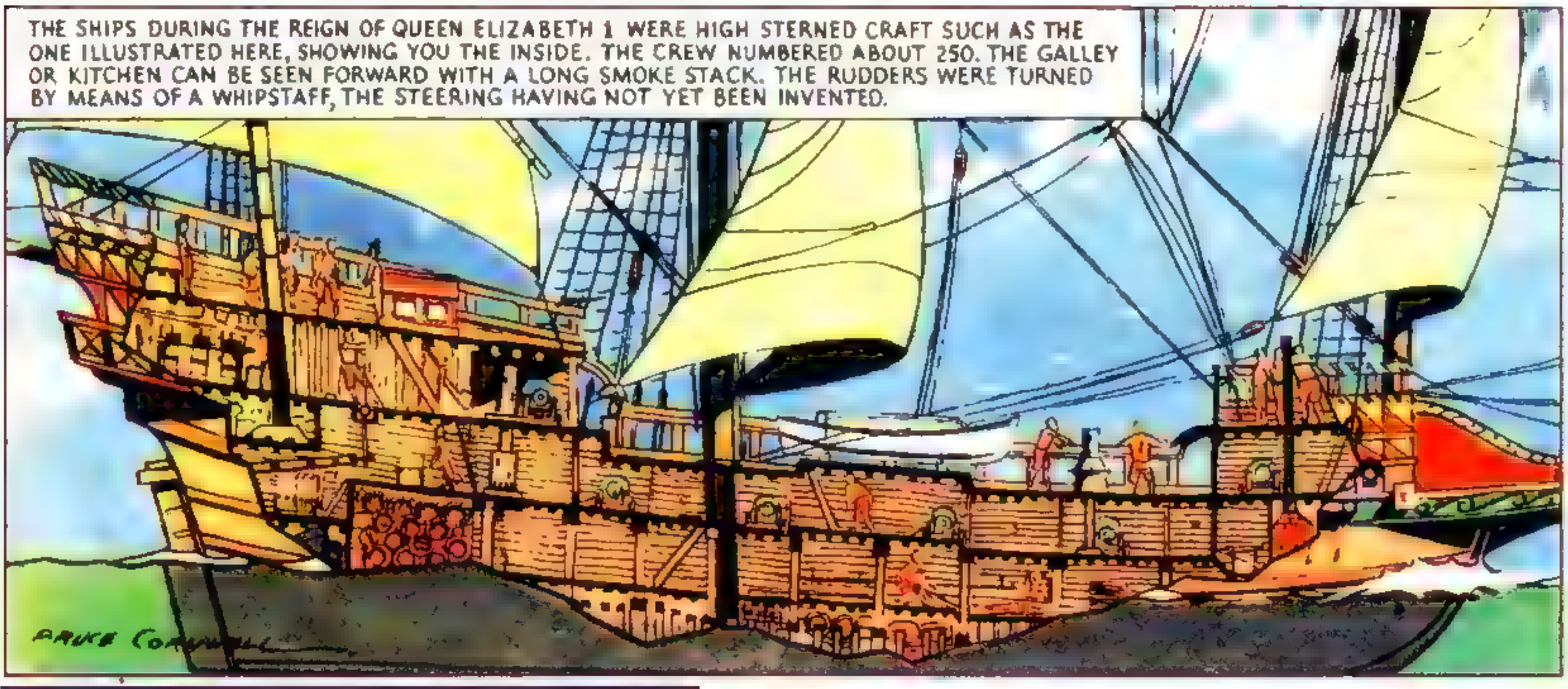
(1) Crow's-nest. (2) Foremast. (3) Two ten-ton derricks. (4) Captain's suite. (5) Wheel-house, with telegraphs, gyro-compass and auto-steering. (6) Wheel-house top. (7) Radar. (8) Radio room. (9) Mainmast. (10) Mizzen-mast. (11) Docking bridge. (12) Strain wire, which measures the exact distance the vessel has travelled; thousands of miles of wire are carried. (13) Recreation room. (14) Crew's quarters. (15) Electric generator. (16) 'Bellmouth' paying-out and twisting gear. (17) Bonded store. (18) Stewards' store. (19) No. 3 cable-tank. (20 No. 4 cable-tank. (21) No. 2 cable-tank. (22) No. 1 cable-tank. (23) Rope stowage. (24) Water ballast tanks. (25) Spare buoys. (26) Engine room. (27) Boiler room. (28) Workshop. (29) Chain bins. (30) Load-cell dynamometer. (31) Starboard anchor. (32) Bow sheaves. (33) Cable marker-buoy. (34) 'Voith Schneider' propeller

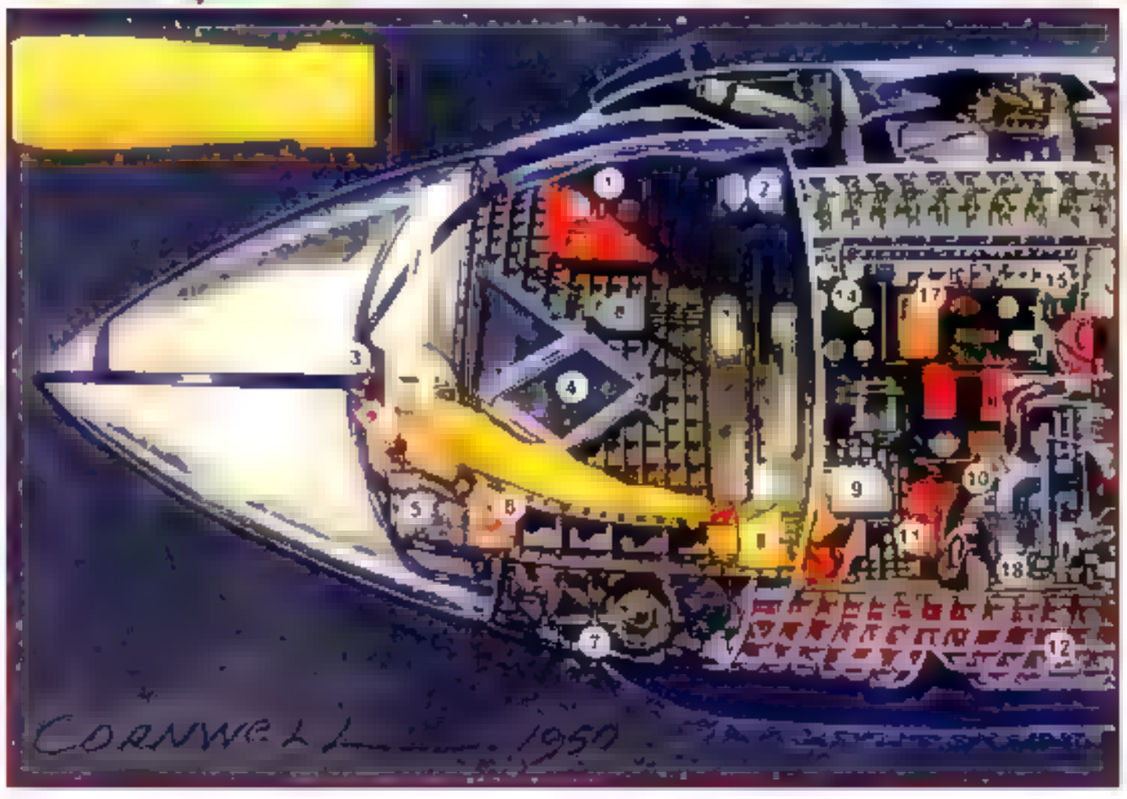


Rather closer to home in Vol. 13 No. 32 (11th August, 1962) was the Woolwich car and passenger ferry which ploughed its trade on the Thames between Woolwich and North Woolwich. Of the four ships that he produced cutaways of for *EAGLE* the Woolwich ferry was the one that had the best chance that *EAGLE* readers would actually travel on. How then was he able to get enough information on the vessels to make the cutaways accurate and was there a need to make educated guesswork? "No guess work ever," replied Bruce emphatically, "there's always some 'clever' individual out there waiting to pull you up." However the Woolwich ferry did pose a different challenge, "I had to dig out information on the new Woolwich ferry only to find out that it had been ordered but not built. The agency supplied me with engineer's plans and wished me luck!"

Bruce Cornwell's final weekly *EAGLE* cutaway was of the first of only four civilian nuclear powered cargo ships ever built, the *N.S. Savannah*. This ship was operated by the American State Marine Lines and the cutaway appeared in Vol. 13 No. 52 (29th December, 1962). To modern eyes this is perhaps the most usual subject of the four cutaways but the *Savannah* was in service from 1962 until 1972 and still exists today berthed at Baltimore in the United States where she has been declared an Historic National Landmark.

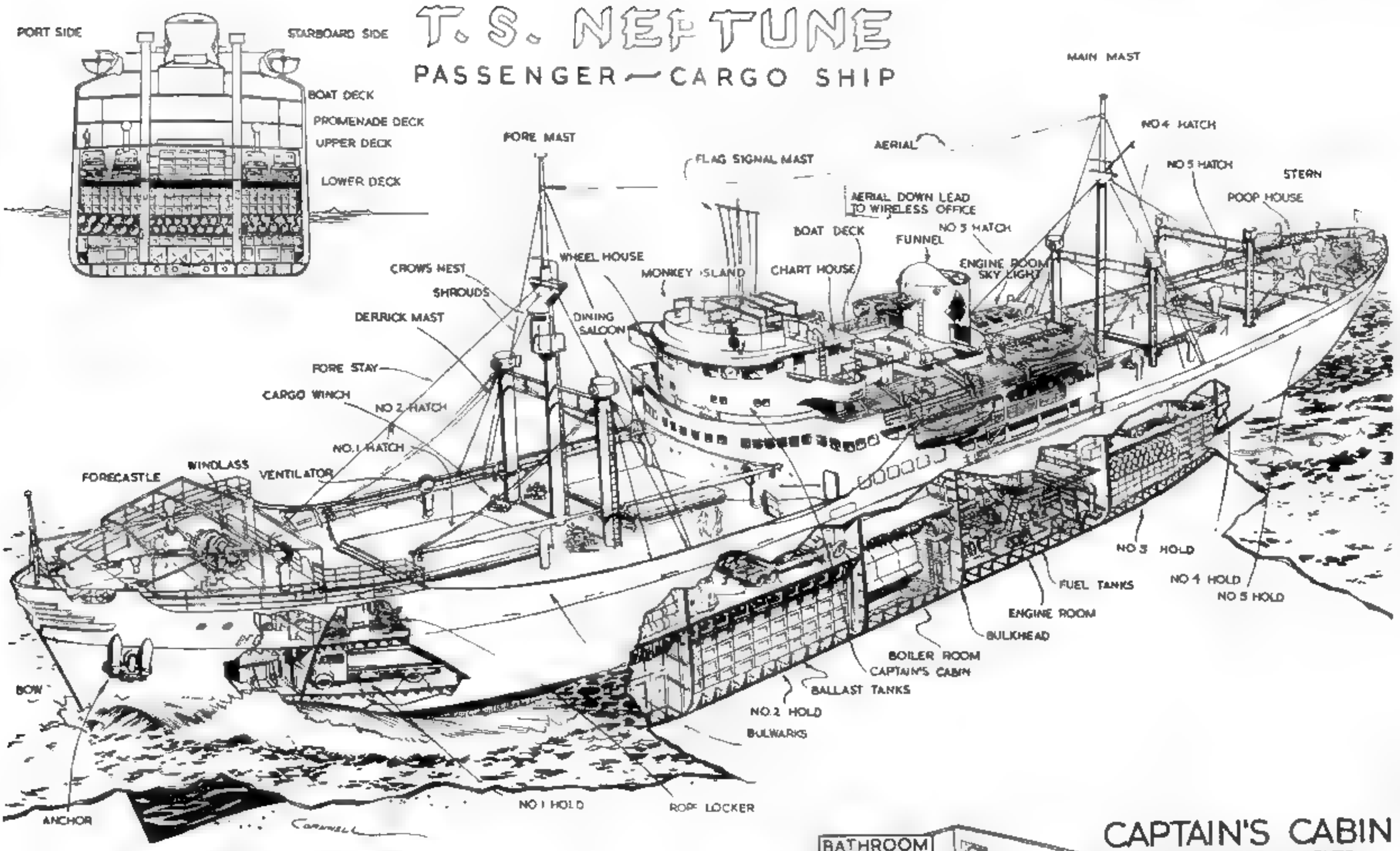
There are a few other cutaways by Bruce Cornwell associated with *EAGLE* that are worth mentioning. In 1952 he illustrated a short factual series entitled 'Ships Through the Ages' and, as part of the 16th and 17th Century Craft section of this in *EAGLE* Vol. 3 No. 8 (30th May, 1952) he presented the sectional cutaway of a high-sterned Elizabethan warship in a large, signed panel.

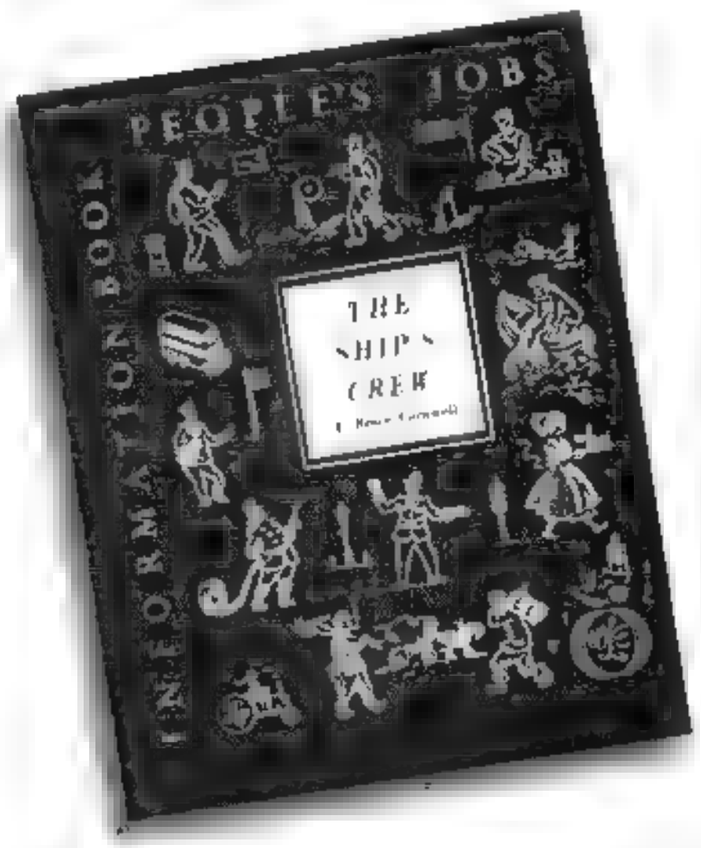

THE SHIPS DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH 1 WERE HIGH STERNED CRAFT SUCH AS THE ONE ILLUSTRATED HERE, SHOWING YOU THE INSIDE. THE CREW NUMBERED ABOUT 250. THE GALLEY OR KITCHEN CAN BE SEEN FORWARD WITH A LONG SMOKE STACK. THE RUDDERS WERE TURNED BY MEANS OF A WHIPSTAFF, THE STEERING HAVING NOT YET BEEN INVENTED.

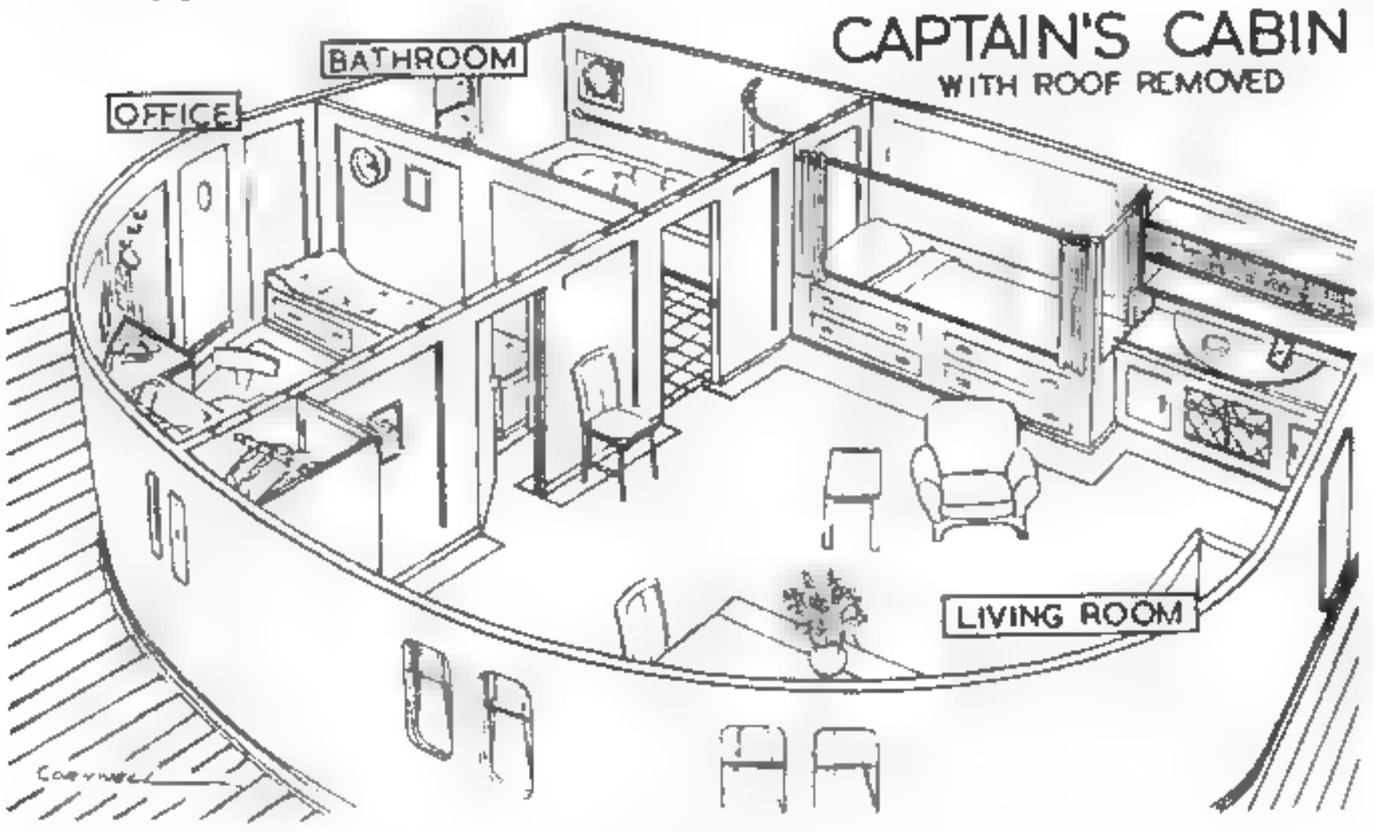


However there was another *EAGLE* cutaway that he did even before the first issue of the comic was published that was, ironically, his last cutaway to be published. The illustration was of Dan Dare's Number 2 rocket ship from the 'Voyage to Venus' story. "Frank requested it", Bruce recalls, "even the layout and left the job to me. This was before we went to press. He was pleased with the finished job, but after that, I don't know what happened to it."

What happened to it was that it lay forgotten for decades until it was rediscovered and was finally published, along with a new key devised by Bruce Cornwell himself listing its different sections, as the colour centrespread of *Spaceship Away*, Issue 22, in Autumn 2010 (and is shown in part on the left.)



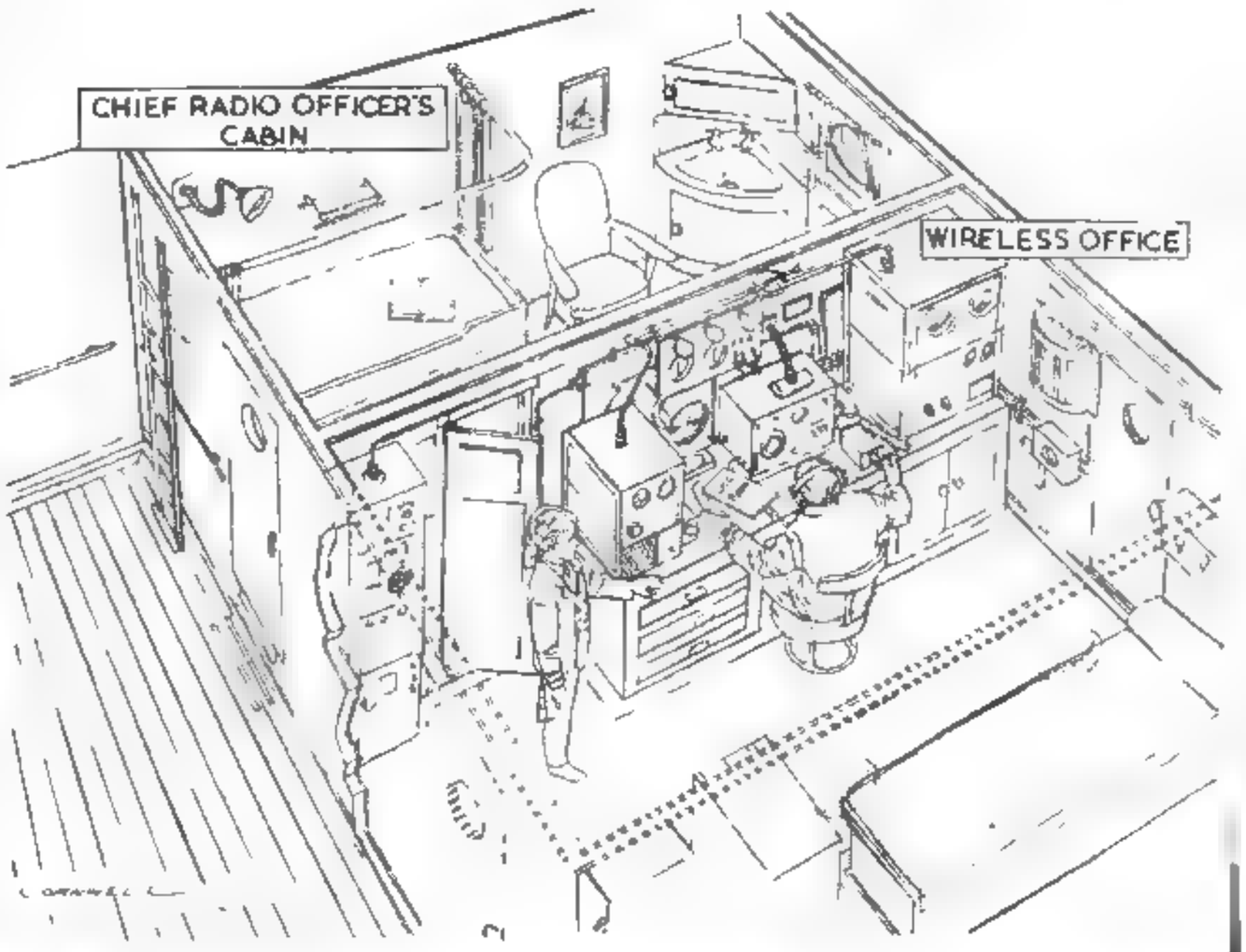




In 1953 Bruce wrote and illustrated one of the Educational Supply Association's People's Jobs books entitled *The Ship's Crew*, which included several cutaways including one of the ship featured in the book. As a former merchant seaman, he was able to use his own experience to create a fictional passenger and cargo ship, the *T.S. Neptune* which the book followed as it loaded passengers and cargo in London and set sail for the Tropics. As well as a large, detailed black and white cutaway of the ship itself on the book's frontispiece, he produced clear cutaways of both the Captain's cabin and the ship's Radio Officer's cabin and office.

Asked if he did any other cutaways for other publications over the years the answer was an emphatic, "Yes, but who they were for I can't remember, except one and that was Pilkington's the glass firm. I worked through a P.R. agency and the work covered buildings, engineering projects, engines and whatever."

Finally asked if he enjoyed the challenge of painting his four main *EAGLE* cutaways Bruce replied, "I did enjoy them; the sea and ships have always been a passion of mine." ❑



Author's Note: Thanks to A. Bruce Cornwell for his time.

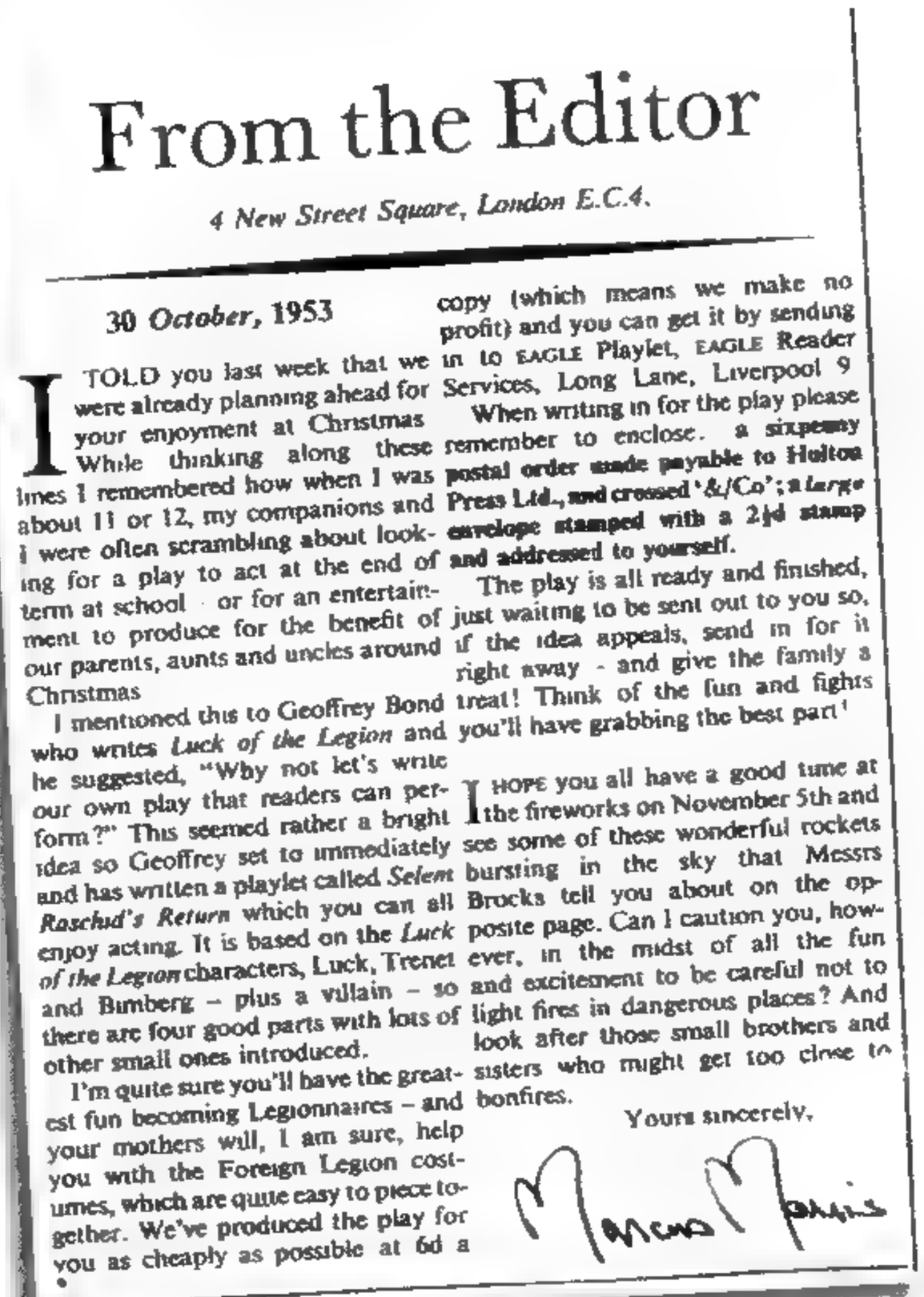
A Look at Luck

by Harold Harpole

A series looking at the Luck of the Legion stories that ran in EAGLE from 1952 to 1961

Part 3

No history of 'Luck of the Legion' would be complete without a mention of Geoffrey Bond's play about the Legionnaires, called *Selem Raschid's Return.* This play was not widely available as it could only be ordered from *EAGLE* Reader Services for the sum of sixpence and a S.A.E. It was first offered in the Editor's letter in *EAGLE* dated 30th October, 1953. This is how it read:



From the Editor

4 New Street Square, London E.C.4.

30 October, 1953

I TOLD you last week that we were already planning ahead for your enjoyment at Christmas. While thinking along these lines I remembered how when I was about 11 or 12, my companions and I were often scrambling about looking for a play to act at the end of term at school - or for an entertainment to produce for the benefit of our parents, aunts and uncles around Christmas.

I mentioned this to Geoffrey Bond who writes *Luck of the Legion* and he suggested, "Why not let's write our own play that readers can perform?" This seemed rather a bright idea so Geoffrey set to immediately and has written a playlet called *Selem Raschid's Return* which you can all enjoy acting. It is based on the *Luck of the Legion* characters, Luck, Trenet and Bimberg – plus a villain – so there are four good parts with lots of other small ones introduced.

I'm quite sure you'll have the greatest fun becoming Legionnaires – and your mothers will, I am sure, help you with the Foreign Legion costumes, which are quite easy to piece together. We've produced the play for you as cheaply as possible at 6d a copy (which means we make no profit) and you can get it by sending in to EAGLE Playlet, EAGLE Reader Services, Long Lane, Liverpool 9.

When writing in for the play please remember to enclose: a sixpenny postal order made payable to Holton Press Ltd., and crossed '&/Co'; a large envelope stamped with a 2½d stamp and addressed to yourself.

The play is all ready and finished, just waiting to be sent out to you so, if the idea appeals, send in for it right away - and give the family a treat! Think of the fun and fights you'll have grabbing the best part!

I HOPE you all have a good time at the fireworks on November 5th and see some of these wonderful rockets bursting in the sky that Messrs Brocks tell you about on the opposite page. Can I caution you, however, in the midst of all the fun and excitement to be careful not to light fires in dangerous places? And look after those small brothers and sisters who might get too close to bonfires.

Yours sincerely,

The play was only six pages long so it did not tax its actors too much. The plot was quite simple: Sergeant Luck and Trenet leave Bimberg to guard a position in the fort but he falls asleep whilst doing this. Who should pop up but the evil Arab, Selem Raschid, who has escaped from his cell. He ties up Bimberg, changing clothes with him, and dumps him in the room behind. Luck and Trenet return and notice that "Bimberg" has lost weight. After making small-talk with "Bimberg", Trenet moves out the back while Luck exits left. The Corporal finds Bimberg tied up and turns round, only to find Raschid pointing a rifle at him. Just then Luck bursts in to say that Raschid has escaped but, grasping the situation instantly, Luck rushes the Arab who is then recaptured. Bimberg is told to put his uniform back on and resume his guard duty, this time without falling asleep.

Several *EAGLE* readers ordered the play and reported on its success in 'Letters to the Editor'. More recently, the *Eagle Times* Players performed a play reading in front of Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Bond and Martin Aitchison at the 1996 *EAGLE* Dinner.

Now, back to the 1955 *EAGLE* and the start of a new adventure that was heralded on the front page banner of the issue dated 11th November. 'South of Senegal' opened underneath a cutaway of a Cooper 1100 racing car. Most of the episode takes place in a boxing ring as Sergeant Luck takes on Legionnaire Markovitch. Punches are exchanged but the last frame switches 2,000 miles away to the jungle, South of Senegal, where a lone figure stands in the doorway of a hut wondering if a message he sent will ever reach the Legion. The identity of this person is revealed in the second episode, as we are introduced to a very worried missionary based in French West Africa.

Meanwhile, Luck wins his boxing match and Bimberg enters the ring for a match with Legionnaire Larssen whom he previously hit in the head while shouting encouragement to his sergeant. In the final frame we see the C.O. reading the missionary's message. He sends for Luck and tells him that the missionary is Father Dubois and, if the natives cut up rough, he is in trouble.

Bimberg too wins his fight, after becoming fighting mad when his opponent smashes up his new kepi.

Once again the C.O. asks the Sergeant to take two Legionnaires to Senegal (and we all know which two he will take!). Luck, Trenet and Bimberg set sail to the country and, on arrival, set out to find a hotel. A young lad shows them to a lodging place and, after booking in, they look for the telegraph office to contact Father Dubois. But as they do this two sinister characters are watching their every move.

In the next episode the two men make a very sharp exit and make their way to Garston's general store. Here they bully Garston into keeping a casket for them. Reluctantly, the storeholder agrees.

Bimberg joins them, now free, but dusting himself down, and tripping over the native robes, which he still wears.

Bimberg: Oh it was nothing, mon sergeant - when you told me about the man's escape I laid a cunning trap for him. How was I to know it would work so well?

Luck: (Drily.) Yes, of course, how were you! Go and take that nightgown off now, Bimberg. Change into uniform, and then report back to me.

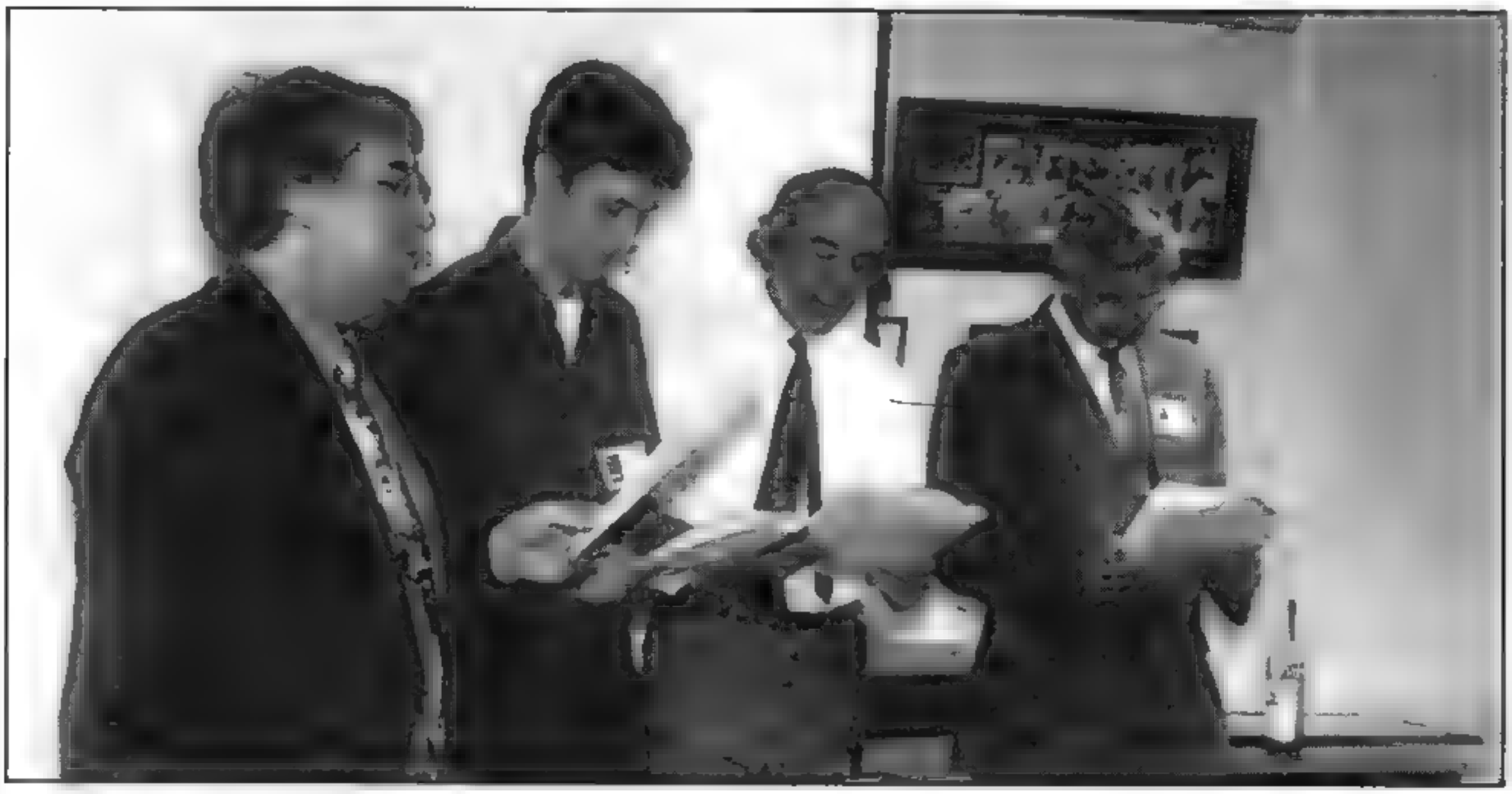
Bimberg: (Saluting smartly) Certainly, mon sergeant. A reward for my smart action, I suppose?

Luck: Yes, Bimberg. You will finish your turn of sentry go as a reward - without going to sleep!.

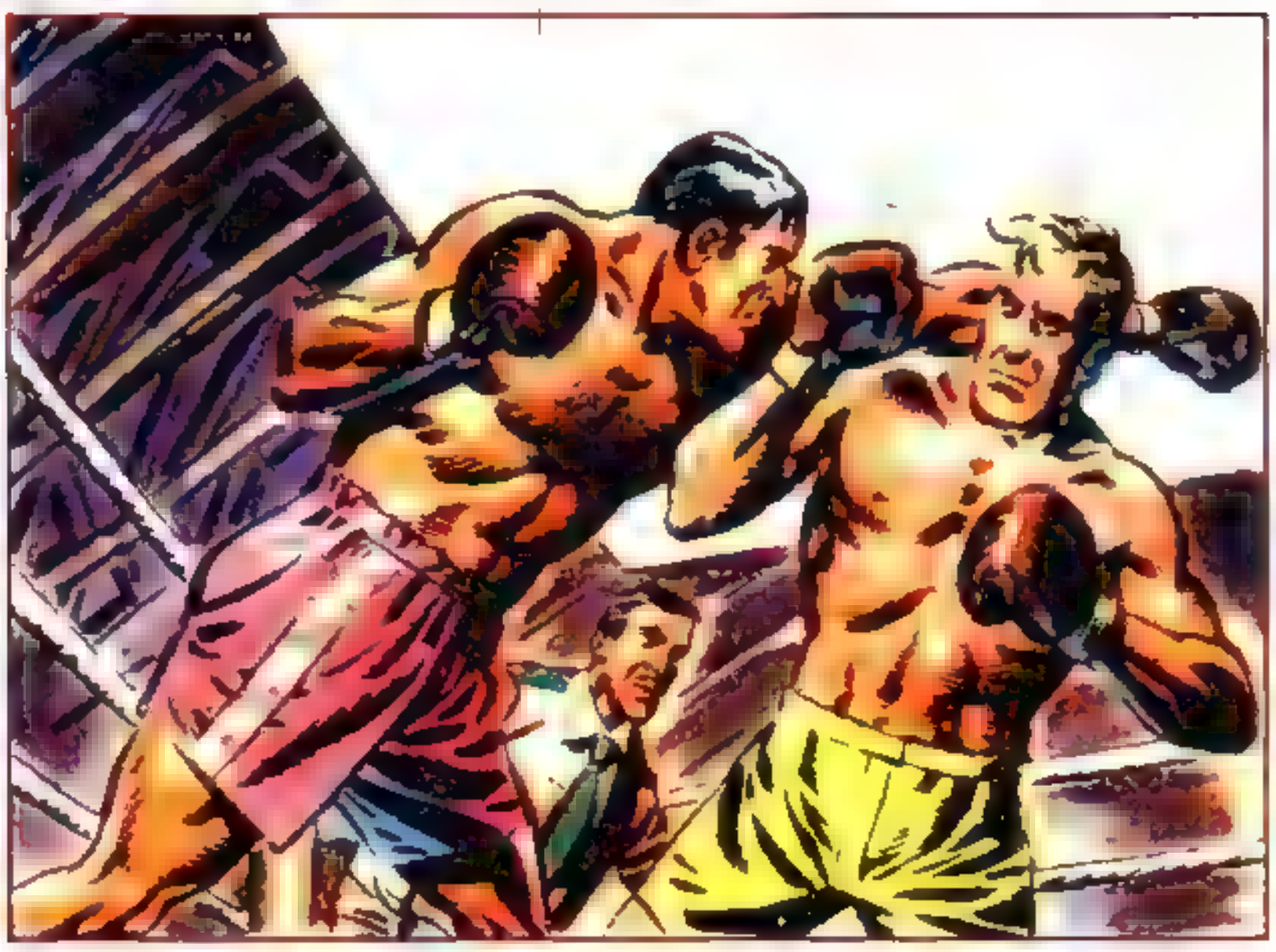
Bimberg: (Throwing his hands up in despair.) Mama Mia!

Luck and Trenet roar with laughter as the curtain falls.

The final page of the Luck play



The Eagle Times Players do a play-reading of 'Selem Raschid's Return' at the 1996 Eagle Society Dinner



Luck's boxing match opens the story at Legion H.Q.

Meanwhile, Luck and his companions send a telegraph up-river to the missionary. They wait some days, filling in time by sightseeing, and Bimberg buys a parrot. Fed up with wasting time, Luck decides to go up-river to see if the trio can find Father Dubois. Needing supplies, they visit Garston's store. Here Bimberg comes across a casket hidden on a top shelf (along with a "Bond" tin of paint: Martin Aitchison's visual joke) and asks what it contains. Garston doesn't want to know and tells them they can have it. Back at their lodgings the Legionnaires question what might be in the casket.

That night the two sinister characters have found out that Garston has given the trio the casket and they set about getting it back. One of them climbs a tree outside the Legionnaires' lodgings and climbs in their room looking for the casket but the parrot screeches, waking up the soldiers. A fight ensues but the intruder escapes, dropping the box.

The next day the trio call on Garston for the supplies and they are told they will be ready next day. They split up and Luck goes on a walkabout and comes across the man who broke into their lodgings. He follows him and walks into a trap. In a disused building the second man lies in wait and coshes Luck with a gun handle as he walks through the darkened building. The attackers are surprised by Trenet and Bimberg and escape leaving the two friends to bring their leader round.

The following day the legionnaires load up their boat and cast off up the river but, after they have gone, the telegraph officer runs to the riverside with a note: "Keep away: danger imminent - Dubois." The Legionnaires and their three bearers are well on their way to the mission but, back at the port, the two sinister men kill Garston and they too set off up the river to catch up with Luck and Co.

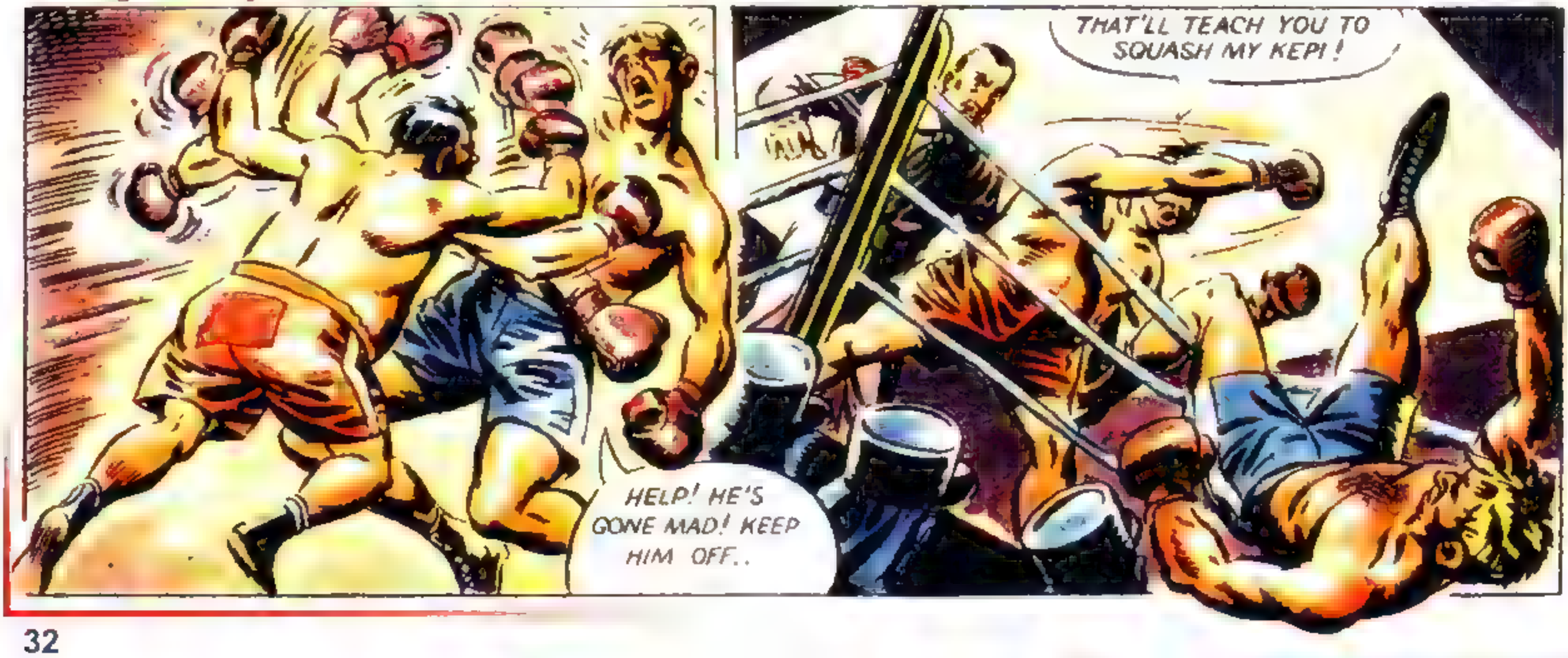
Further up the river things don't go well for the Legionnaires. They shoot some rapids all right but a hippo upturns the boat and they become prey to crocodiles, which are dispatched by gunfire. From then on the party is obliged to carry on by foot.

Down the river, the two sinister characters find the floating dead crocodiles and realise what has happened to the soldiers. They press on and reach the mission long before Luck and Co. They meet up with two other evil looking types, Snell and Marchant who are selling liquor to the native M'Abfi tribe against Father Dubois's wishes. The four decide to work together against Luck's party.

Back in the jungle, Luck notices smoke rising in the distance. As it is in the area of the mission he suspects the worst. He has every right too, for the four criminals have worked up the M'Abfi tribe of natives to torch the mission and take the Father prisoner.

One of the Father's faithful manage to reach Luck and tell him of the happenings at the mission

Bimberg's match follows



Enter Horatio Napoleon....

and that the M'Abfi tribe are on their way to prevent the soldiers from stopping their liquor supply. Sure enough, the tribe confront the Legionnaires, who open up with rifles. This drives the natives back, allowing the Father's messenger to run to another tribe for help.

The leader of the tribe is a bowler-hatted character with the name of Horatio Napoleon who sets about the M'Abfi tribe with his followers and his umbrella, driving them away.

Some of the followers spot the casket in Luck's bag and, thinking that it will bring great trouble for them, they are afraid and walk off in the night. Bimberg is on guard duty during all this but falls asleep. Next morning only the three friends remain.

They start off again looking for the kidnapped Father but deep in the jungle they too are captured by the M'Abfi tribe. They are taken to a village and find Father Dubois there too with the four villains. As Luck will still not give up the casket, Snell threatens to shoot the Father and so the Sergeant discloses where the item is. With the casket now in the hands of the criminals the Legionnaires and the Father are locked up as prisoners for the night,but they are released by one of Dubois's men disguised as a M'Abfian. As the party creep out their rescuer is knifed by the witchdoctor. Luck takes him on and knocks out the native.

Meanwhile, Trenet and Bimberg decide to look for the casket among the sleeping criminals. They not only find it but relieve the sleepers of their firearms and make a quick escape into the jungle. Luck knows of a deserted Legion post and the party make for it, hoping to hold out when Snell and his partners come looking for them.

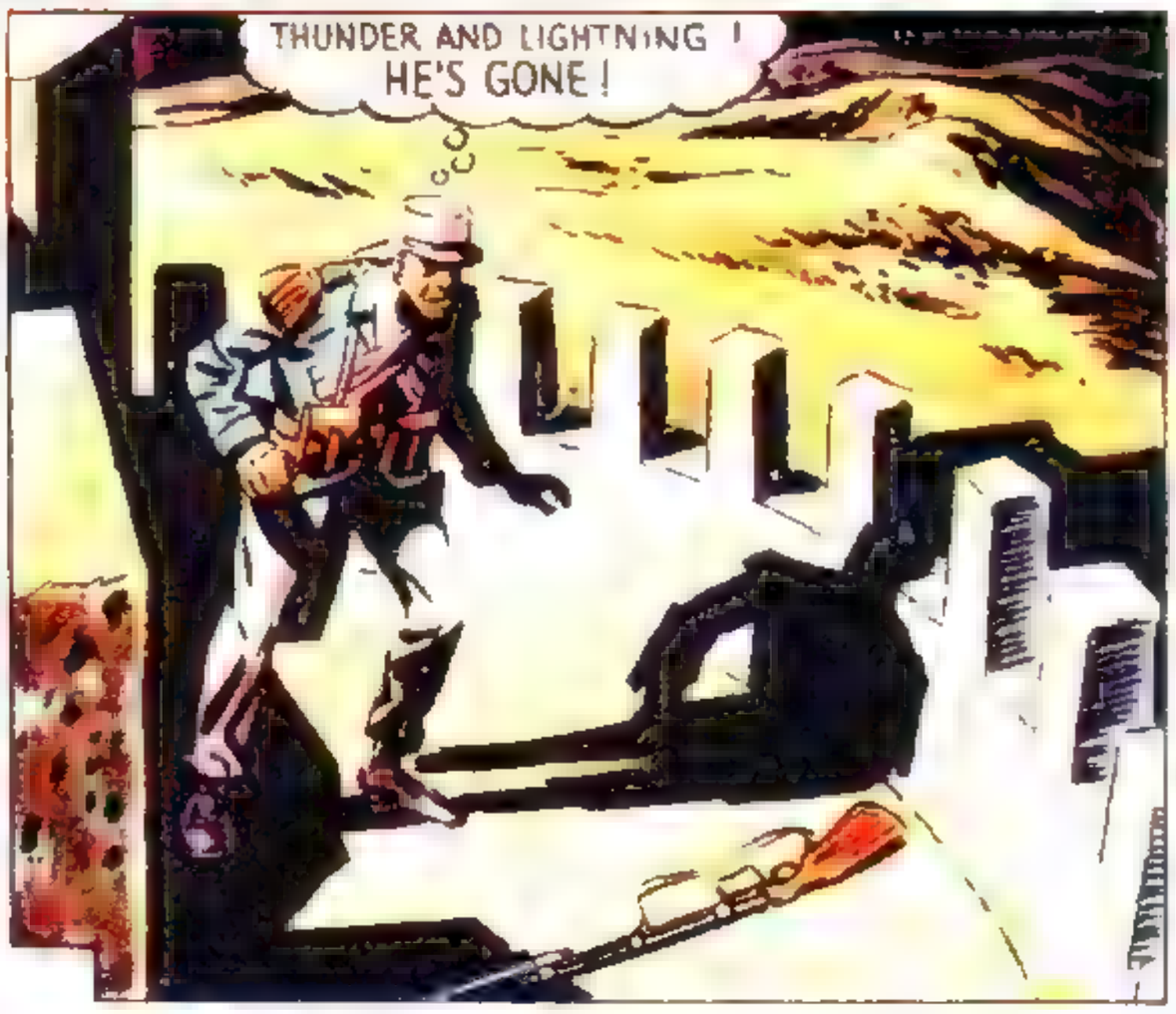
The criminals do arrive with a pack of natives and battle commences. The cowardly white men let the natives do the fighting but soon the initiative changes when Horatio Napoleon's men join the fight and the criminals creep away into the jungle.

Snell and Marchant come face to face with the witchdoctor and they are killed. The other two are captured when Bimberg trips them up. Then it's a trip back down the river and the two criminals are locked up. Horatio and Father Dubois agree to rebuild the mission but they have no money. However, Luck at last has a chance to open the casket. Inside the false bottom, a pile of precious jewels is found; the value of these will pay for a new mission and Horatio Napoleon gets a new umbrella.

* * * * * * * * *

The next story, *The Shadow of The Scimitar,* was one of the best; and Marcus Morris presumably agreed, as he chose this story for inclusion in his book *The Best of Eagle.* The story starts in Fort Lebel, a Legion outpost in the Sahara desert. Something is wrong and this is reported to Luck by one of the sentries, Stavil, who has heard a swishing sound. The two Legionnaires report to the C.O., Captain Bavasc, but he dismisses the soldiers who are told to get back to their duties. The Sergeant tells Trenet and then decides to visit Stavil on the battlements, but all he can find is Stavil's rifle. The alert is sounded but there is still no news of the missing Legionnaire. The C.O. is not happy, but doubles the guards.

Luck takes Stavil's place and later hears the swishing sound again. Unbeknown to the Sergeant it is the noise made by a rope being prepared for throwing outside the wall. The rope is hurled at Luck as he peers into the darkness and he is caught by the rope. He staggers to his machine gun and on reaching it opens fire down on the perpetrators. The C.O. is informed and Luck tells him that the rope is used in this way by the most dreaded of Arab tribes, the Touareg. Once again the C.O.



Legionnaire Stavil goes missing

Fort Lebel and the C.O. Are alerted

dismisses the idea but the next day Luck is instructed to take the entire garrison out into the desert to look for Touareg. It is regarded as certain death by the garrison but they obey orders, leaving the C.O. alone in the fort and waving them a madman's goodbye as they march to their deaths, perhaps.

THERE'S NO SIGN OF STAVIL WE'VE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE
PERHAPS YOU I BELIEVE ME NOW MON CAPITAINE ! THUUGH IT'S TOO LATE TO SAVE THAT POOR FELLOW
A CURSE ON IT ! YET THE MYSTERY MUST BE CLEARED UP DOUBLE ALL GUARDS AND REPORT TO ME IN THE MORNING

As they prepare for the night, Legionnaire Pavlos accuses the Sergeant of being responsible for killing his friend Stavil but Luck orders him back to his post. Just then, Arabs appear on the close hilltop. A battle ensues, which the soldiers win, and they decide to make their way back to Fort Lebel, although they know they are vulnerable to attack by the Touareg. As they arrive, the front door is noticed to be ajar. A trap is suspected and six snipers are detailed to fire at the door, which explodes when bullets hit it.

The fort is empty and in ruins. After a search, Luck decides to take his men back to H.Q. but he knows he and his men will be vulnerable again. Sure enough the Touareg attack but this time the Legionnaires are saved by a passing patrol of Chasseurs D'Afrique horsemen.

Back at H.Q. Luck tells his story to the C.O. and then the officer asks him to bring his friends to look at a secret weapon he has locked up. This turns out to be a motor car. This horseless carriage is a present for Sultan Omar Bin Mansoor of Timbuk-to, who is a good friend of the Legion.

Luck is detailed to deliver the car with three other Legionnaires. He picks Trenet, Bimberg and Pavlos, who is put forward by the C.O. as a rear gunner in the car.

The Legionnaires would seem to be accomplished car mechanics, as they strip the engine down and put it back together! And so they set off across the desert with Bimberg at the wheel. As they take a halt, the intended destination of a fort is spotted through binoculars but it is under siege from Touareg tribesmen. They decide to camouflage the car and wait out the night. The Touareg ride by without noticing Luck and Co.

The following morning they set off again for the fort and arrive to find the fort and the garrison have seen the Touareg off. The C.O. listens to their story and has a suggestion. A caravan will shortly arrive at the fort and they will be continuing on Luck's direction. Why not dismantle the car and hide it in bits among the horses and camels?

This the soldiers do, and they continue their journey with the caravan. That night they set up camp but the Touareg attack and Luck and his companions are captured. Luck thinks he knows the Touareg leader, the Blue Shadow, although only his eyes show through his headgear.

IT'S NO GOOD MAKING FOR THAT FORT — THEY'VE GOT ENOUGH ON THEIR PLATES!
ARE THEY SOUP PLATES? WE ALL SEEM TO BE IN A BIT OF A STEW!
WHY NOT MAKE A DETOUR IN THE DESERT AND HIDE UP?

MA FOI! HAVE YOU EVER TRIED HIDING IN THE DESERT?
/ HAVE! AND IT CAN BE DONE — WITH MY LITTLE ENTRENCHING TOOL!
THEY'RE RIGHT, CORPORAL — IT'S OUR BEST CHANCE. START HER UP AGAIN...

A desert adventure in a car!

Tied up, the Legionnaires are taken to one of the hidden cities of the Sahara. Here they are asked to join the Touareg but Luck refuses and the soldiers are then set to work in the mines.

The following morning, he decides to tell one of the Blue Shadow's men about the car, which is now in bits on the camels. Thinking he will be pleased, the lieutenant agrees and the Legionnaires put the car together. Then, with a cloud of smoke, they make their escape.

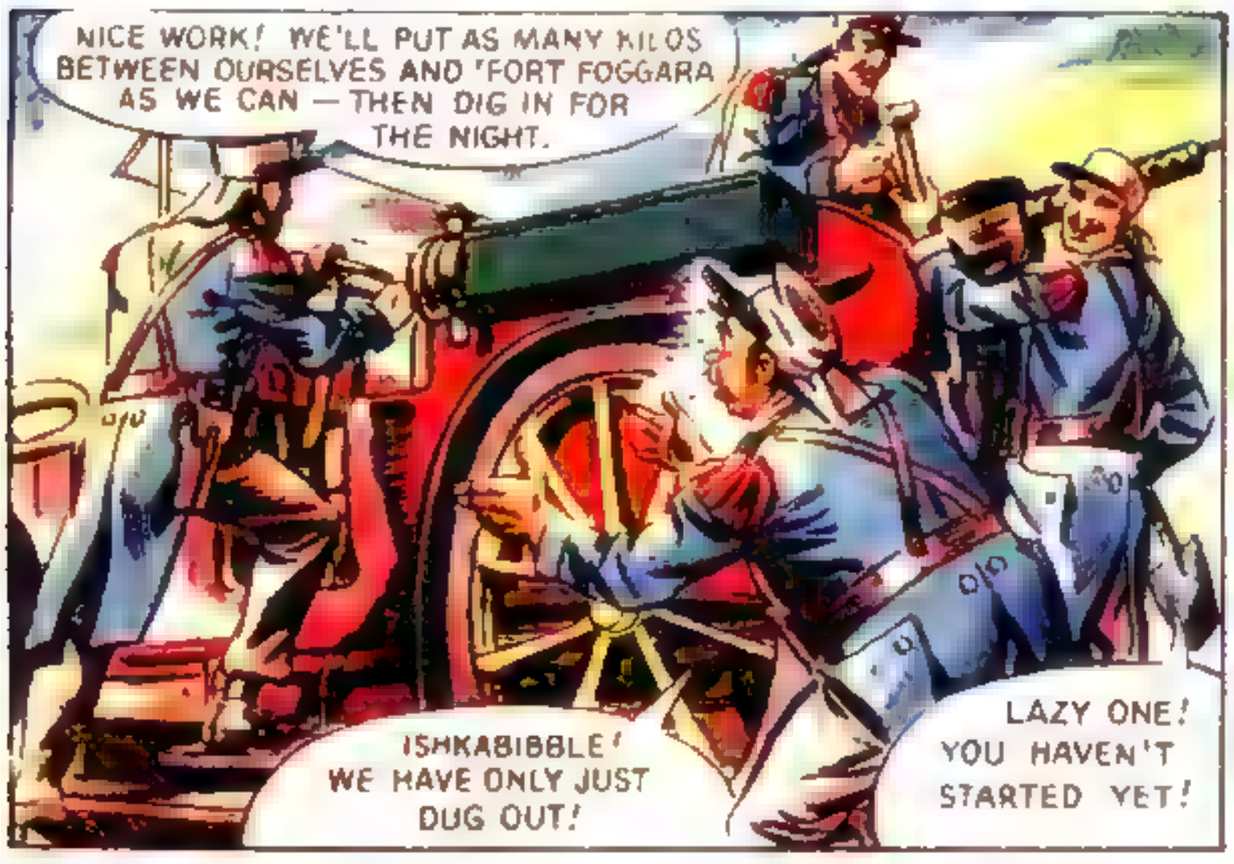
They come across some old dwellings in a rock face and settle for the night. Luck has a plan; someone to go back to the Touareg stronghold, someone to make his way to the Sultan in Timbukto. The Sergeant draws the straw to go back, Trenet the straw to go forward.

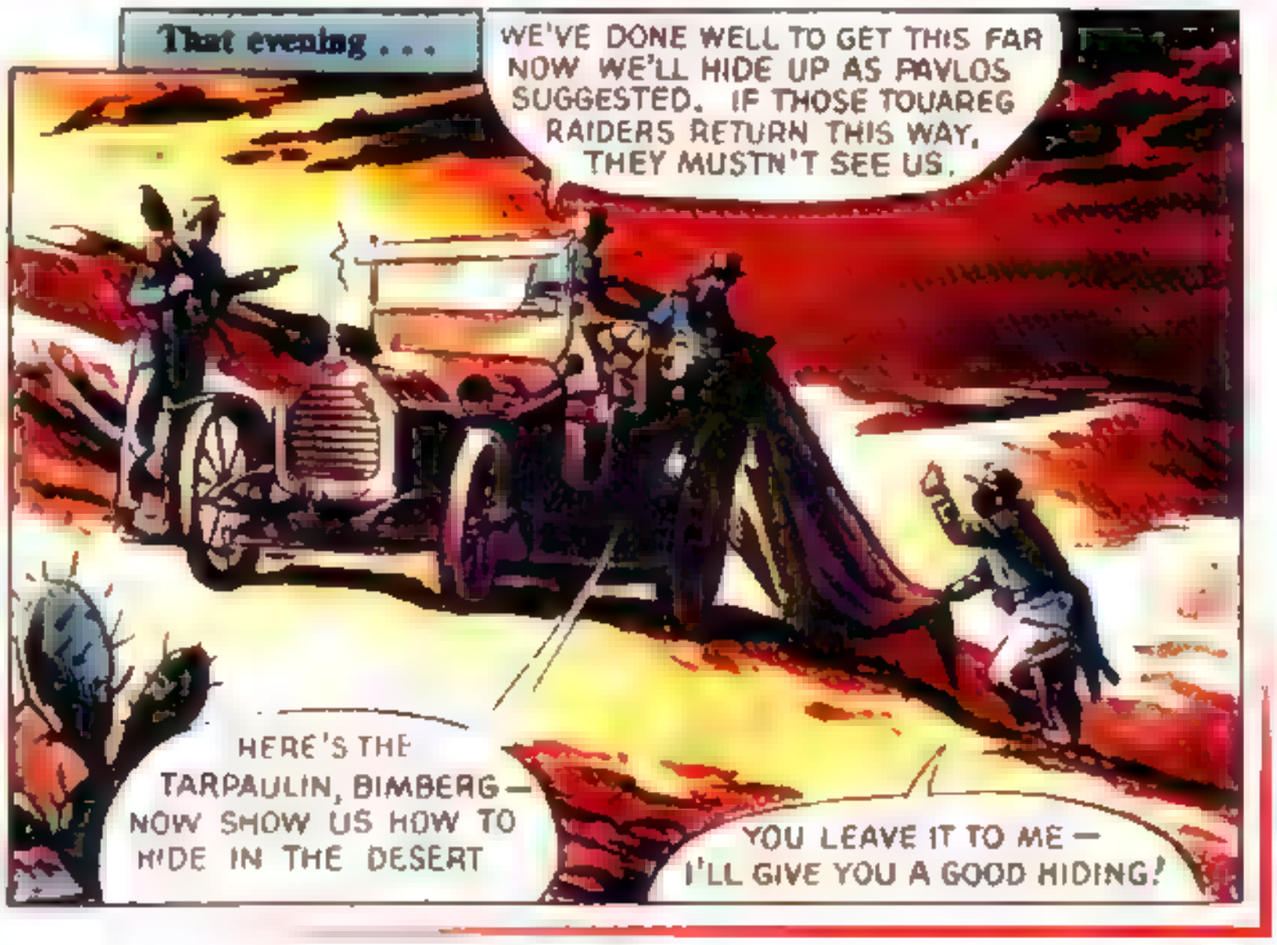
At the Touareg H.Q. Luck manages to view the Blue Shadow's rooms and notices a Legion uniform on the back of the door. The Shadow then walks in and Luck's fears are realised - the Blue Shadow is Captain Bavasc of the Legion!

Meanwhile, out in the desert, Trenet discovers he is lost in the starless night and fears this will be his last night on earth. However, he is found by the Sultan of Timbukto's men on their way to meet Luck. He is revived and the Sultan and his men accompany Trenet back into the desert to find Bimberg and Pavlos.

While all this is happening, Luck makes his escape from the Touareg hideout on a fast camel and manages to reach the car with the two Legionnaires. The Touareg are in hot pursuit so, to put them off the scent, Luck sends the camel off across the desert riderless. For a while the Arabs follow it. When they discover the deception they turn around, only to be met by Trenet and the Sultan's men. The Touareg are chased back to their stronghold and close the giant doors but the Legionnaires drive the car straight through them.

In the mayhem, Bavasc escapes into some caverns followed by Luck. From another entrance, Pavlos appears and is uncertain who to shoot - Luck or Bavasc - but he hears the conversation between Luck and Bavasc and realises it was the C.O. who sent his friend Stavil to his death and not the Sergeant. Pavlos jumps across a chasm and with one blow sends Bavasc to his death. The Sultan's car has another renovation and the Sultan is then presented with the restored vehicle. ❑


NICE WORK! WE'LL PUT AS MANY KILOS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND 'FORT FOGGARA AS WE CAN — THEN DIG IN FOR THE NIGHT.
ISHKABIBBLE! WE HAVE ONLY JUST DUG OUT!
LAZY ONE! YOU HAVEN'T STARTED YET!


That evening . . .
WE'VE DONE WELL TO GET THIS FAR NOW WE'LL HIDE UP AS PAVLOS SUGGESTED. IF THOSE TOUAREG RAIDERS RETURN THIS WAY, THEY MUSTN'T SEE US.
HERE'S THE TARPAULIN, BIMBERG — NOW SHOW US HOW TO HIDE IN THE DESERT
YOU LEAVE IT TO ME — I'LL GIVE YOU A GOOD HIDING!

DAN DARE Figures Part 2

by Ted Herbert

Southall/Britains

In the mid-fifties a small English firm, M.G. Southall Ltd., produced a plastic set of Dan Dare figures. The famous toy-soldier firm, William Britains, was appointed sole concessionaire for overseas markets; and sets of the brightly coloured and boxed figures were exported from their Sunderland Road site in Walthamstow, London, E17.

There were five figures in the series, made of unbreakable plastic, without bases and standing over 80mm (3¼ inches) high: Dan Dare (14/2), Digby (14/3), Sir Hubert Guest (14/4), Sondar (14/5) and a second Treen (14/6) - there was no 14/1.

They were sold from an illustrated counter-pack with the *EAGLE* logo (see illustration and *Plastic Warrior*, No. 89).

A set, identified as circa 1954, was sold by Vectis Auctions recently for the astounding sum of £2,470, three times the pre-sale estimate.

Close-ups of Southall large-scale (80mm) figures

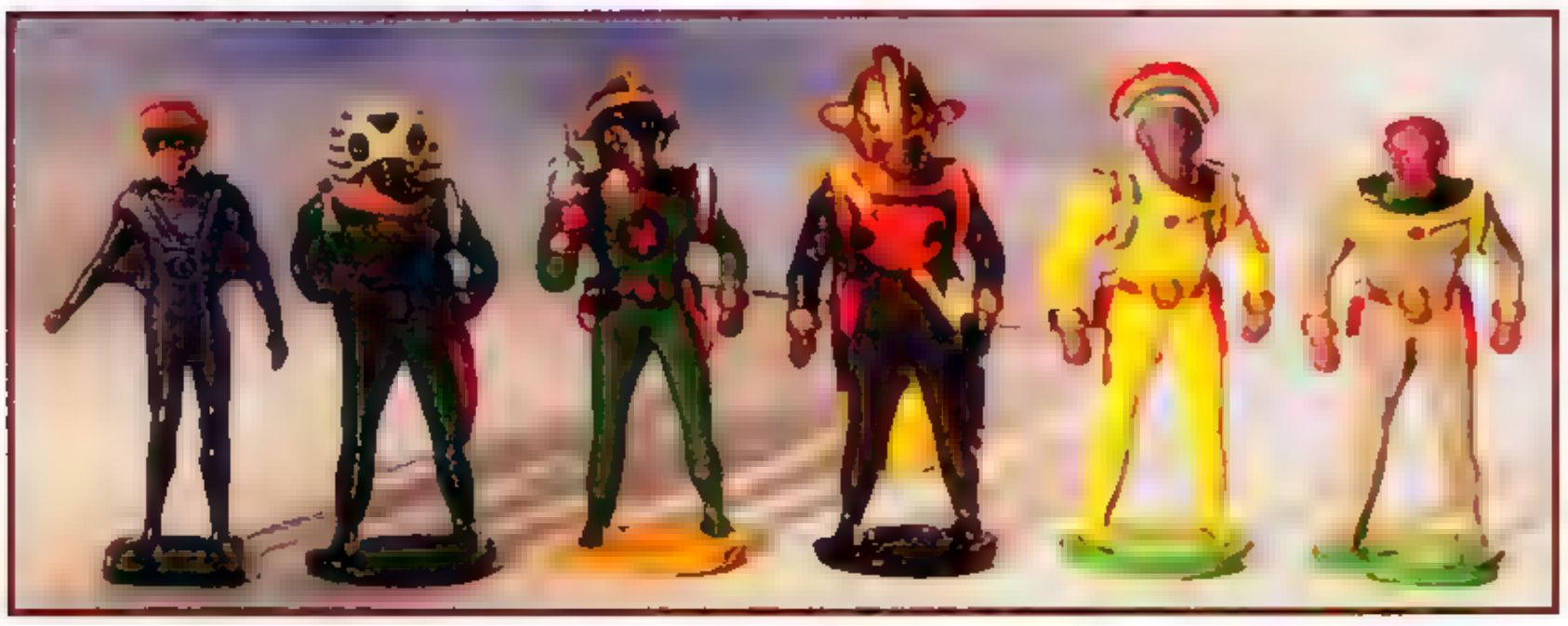
Mettoy Playthings

One of the stranger marketing ploys for Dan Dare merchandise was the Mettoy plastic set No. 8250 of 'Dan Dare' Space Men – strange as the seven figures in the set bear no relation whatsoever to the *EAGLE* characters.

The figures were nearly 90mm (3½ inches) high and six of them had removable helmets, the remaining one being a robot. A set in its original window display box, as shown in the Mettoy catalogue for 1954, with some creasing, sold for £2,280 at Christie's in 2007, some nine times more than its pre-sale estimate.

Mettoy 'Dan Dare' Space Men Set

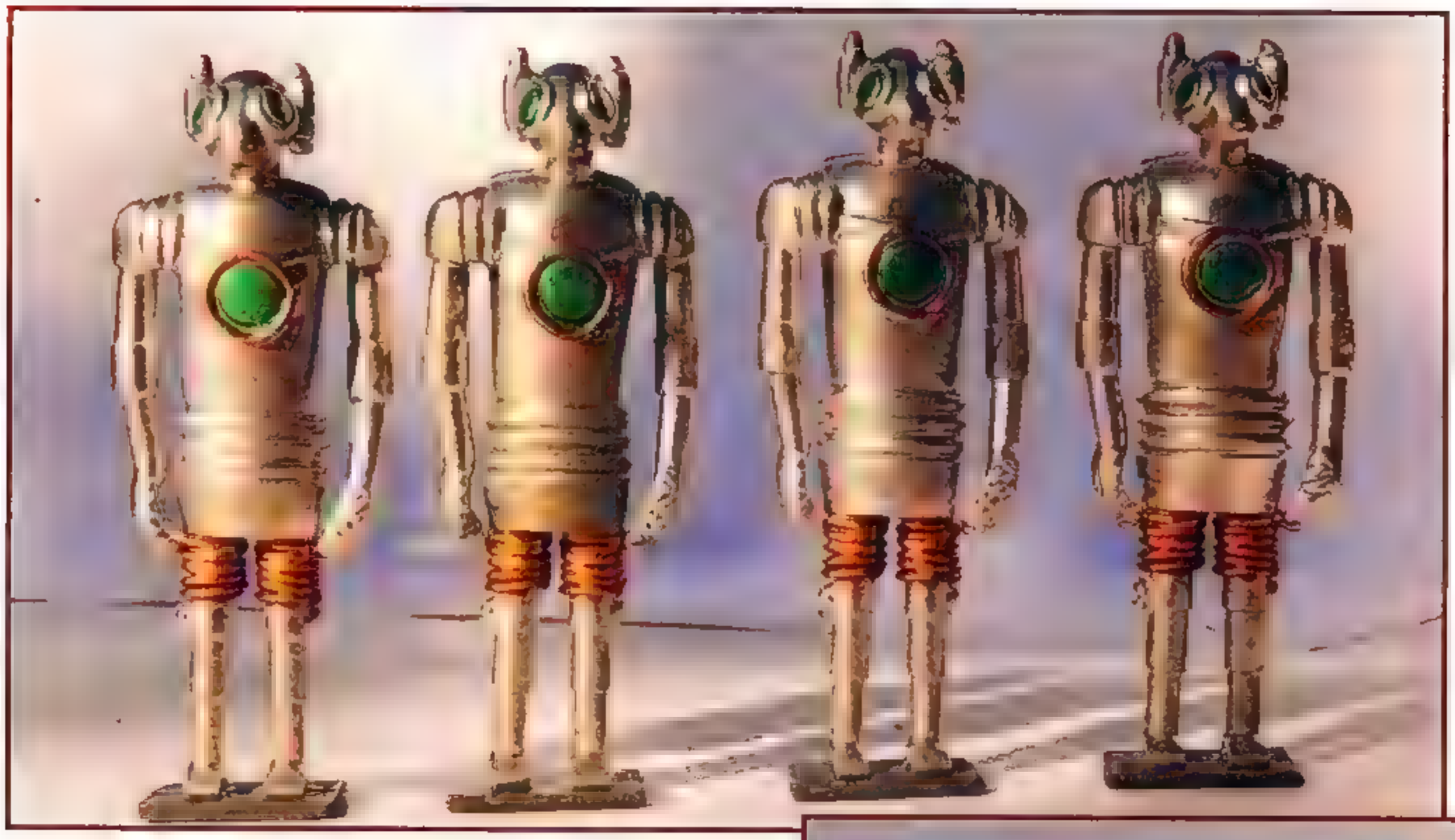
Unicorn Miniatures: Commander Lex O'Malley, Laslo Romanov, Tharl and a Theron



Rogue Planet: Lero, Super Phant I, Phant Guard I, Kruel (Warrior Priest of Orak), Super Phant II and Phant Guard II

Unicorn Miniatures

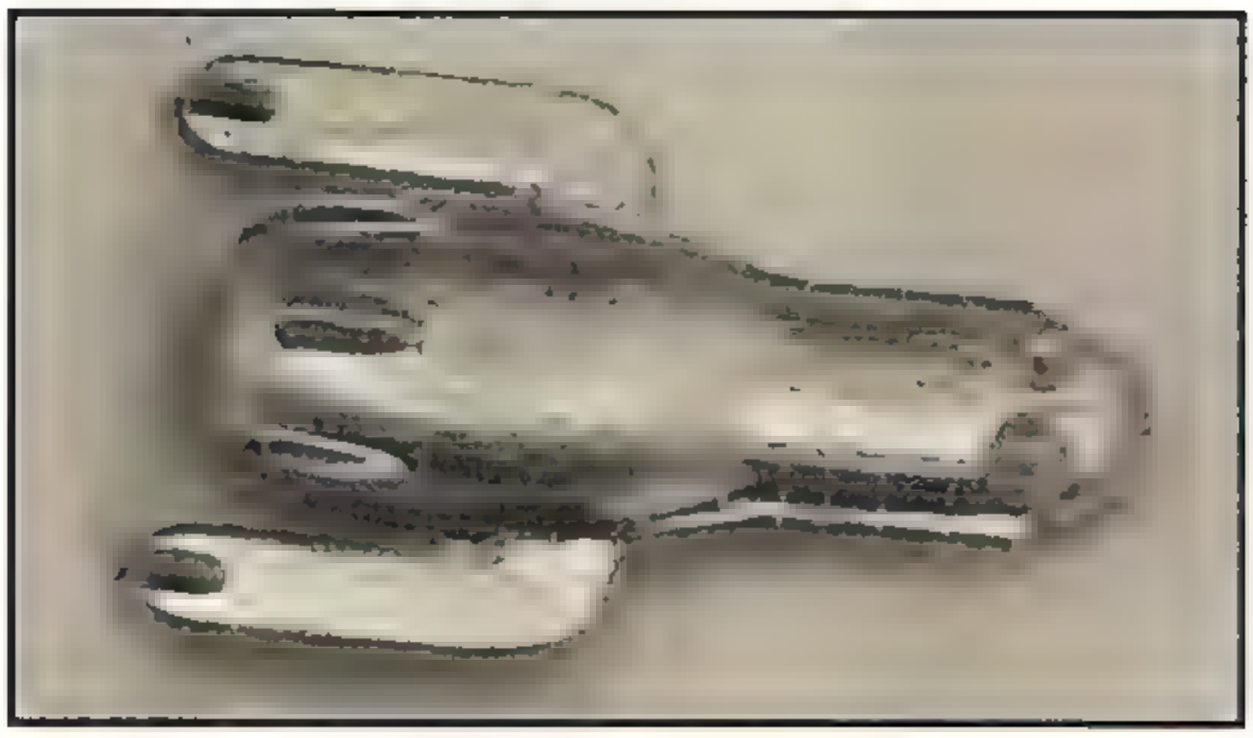
The most extensive range of Dan Dare figures ever issued was produced by Unicorn Miniatures of Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear at toy fairs in the eighties. Andrew Rose of Bastion Figures may have had a hand in the design work. The 50-65mm (2-2½ inches) figures sold for £6 each and included the usual Dan Dare, Digby, Mekon, Professor Peabody, space cadet and Lex O'Malley types. There were four Dan Dare figures, in Spacefleet uniform, in spacesuit, in flying jacket and with a jet pack. Of far greater interest, however, were the types not done before: Hank, Pierre, Lero from Cryptos, Super Phant, Phant Warrior, Phant Guard, Treen Scientist, Treen with Bazooka, Stripey, Lord Vora, Laslo Romanov, Doctor Blasco, Tharl, Theron, and Kruel. Odd figures from this range occasionally pop up on eBay.



Unicorn Miniatures: Reign of the Robots

Unicorn Minatures: Stripey and Lord Vora, Dictator of Saturnia

Treen party on the warpath with space guns, bazookas and Fido. Converted Unicorn Miniatures



Unicorn Miniatures: Anastasia (with retracted wings)

Other Manufacturers

In the eighties Little Lead Soldiers of Cambridge, now relocated to France, produced Dan Dare and Digby on a wire support that made them to look as though they were flying! A nice touch.

Little Lead Soldiers: Dan Dare and Digby
- plus Mekon figure of unknown origin

The latest product to hit the shops is a 1:6 scale action-man type of Dan Dare, as illustrated above right, marketed by Day2Day trading in 2010.

Tailpiece

The above is only an introduction to the subject. For example, I have no information on the provenance of the Digby figure illustrated right, which is made of resin and is 95mm (3 ¾ inches) high. The base is inscribed "HB (?) - Fleetway '96".

If any members have any further information on Dan Dare figures, I would be most grateful if they could contact me by email on this or any other related matter at: ted.herbert@tesco.net ❑

Day2Day Dan Dare Action Figure

Note. *Plastic Warrior* is a magazine for collectors of plastic figures and is available from:
Paul Morehead, 65 Walton Court, Woking, Surrey, GU21 5EE, UK.

Andrew Coffey Remembers

THE SHIP THAT LIVED

'The Ship That Lived' was one of the shorter 'Dan Dare' stories, just 12 episodes long, although several of the late sixties stories had only 9 episodes to their name.

This story started in *EAGLE* Vol. 9 No. 5. Why the 'Reign of the Robots' story didn't carry on is a mystery for it "finished" with Sir Hubert trying to fly the damaged ship, *Anastasia* to Venus with an injured Dan Dare next to him. Not a very satisfactory conclusion.

As Sir Hubert attempts to return to Venus the Mekon's ships are in hot pursuit. Digby, Crusoe, Friday and Flamer take off in Treen fighters to help Dan and Sir Hubert. Lex threatens to drop the Mekon on his head if any Treens so much as move.

Plenty of action in the following pages. Vol. 9 No. 6 has a wide-angle frame showing a deep space battle. *Anastasia* is hit and plummets toward Venus. Sir Hubert is trapped and Dan is still unconscious, but manages to wake up at Sir Hubert's orders, shouted at him as friends watch on a telecom screen. Dan revives and takes control, as the ship dives toward Venus.

Several large frames are used in the following episodes as *Anastasia* lands on the Venusian lava plains.

Hank and Pierre come to the rescue on flying chairs. They nearly bungle the operation by losing a chair, but they find a way out by using inflated space suits. The huge silicon mass threatens to engulf the *Anastasia* but a bombardment with fluoride grenades helps a little.

Some Treens do agree to help rescue the ship, but on Mekonta Treens are made to supply veteo lifting gear and pretty soon take off to help out as Hank continues to fire fluorine grenades at the silicon mass.

The veteo cranes are prepared to lift *Annie* and the Mekon is dumped on the side nearby.

Under Dan's control, the ship is lifted out of the silicon quicksand. Meanwhile, the unattended Mekon seizes a flying chair and on its microphone calls on "the last three of Venus" - who were to appear later in the Keith Watson era.

A strange submarine arises from the silicon for the Mekon, who escapes his captors. Later the battered *Anastasia* is rebuilt by the Therons and becomes as good as new. The party then prepare to return to Earth, Dan and Digby in the *Anastasia* the rest in a Treen ship. They all land on Earth to a tumultuous reception. ❑

DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
in
THE SHIP THAT LIVED
FRANK HAMPSON
THE STORY SO FAR
Dan Dare, greatest pilot of all time, is back at the helm of his famous old spaceship *Anastasia*. Out of control, and with her tail blazing, 'Old Annie' was hurtling wildly towards Venus when Dan recovered consciousness and managed to pull her out of her death-dive. Now, Dan is taking the biggest risk of his life in trying to crash-land *Anastasia* on the southern hemisphere of Venus
TUCK YOUR HEAD IN, CHIEF! WE'RE GOING DOWN!

Leslie Wood in the 1930s

by

Will Grenham

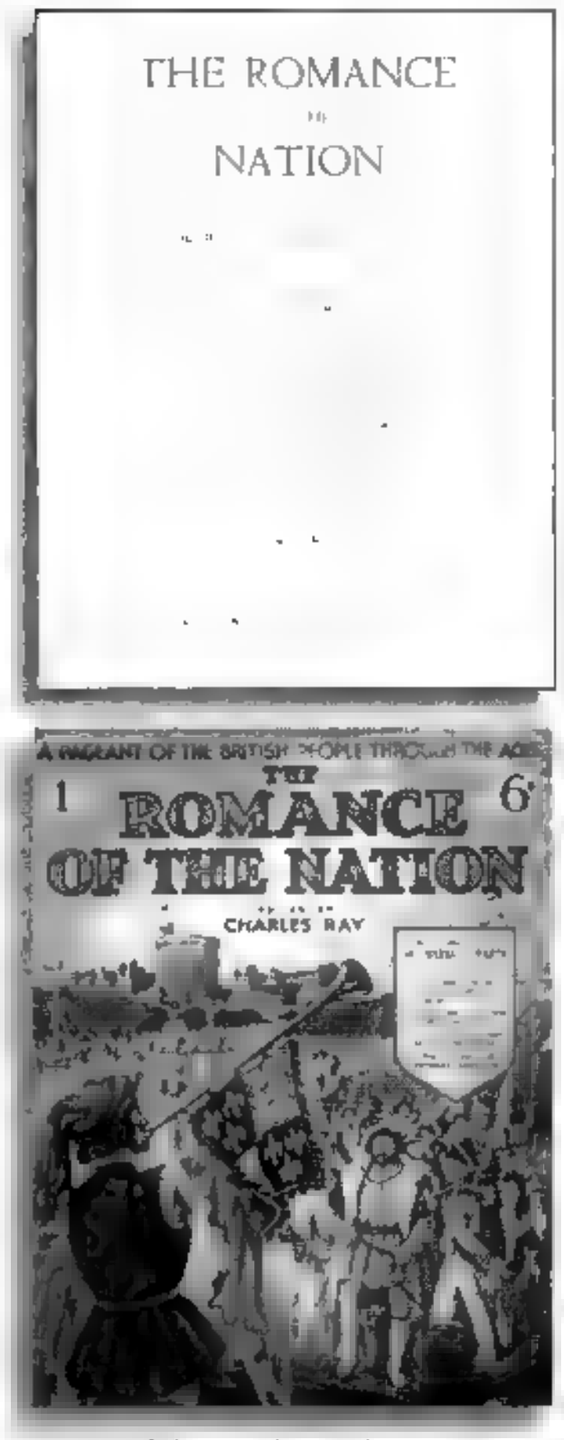
With thanks to Tony English

Readers of *Eagle Times*' 'Postbag' will remember that in *Eagle Times* Vol. 24 No. 4 there was a letter from Tony English referring to two volumes from the 1930s which contain illustrations by Leslie (Ashwell) Wood. It seems at that time Wood signed his work "L. Wood", or simply "L.W.". The books in question were *The World of Wonder* and *The Romance of the Nation*, both edited by Charles Ray. The title pages are shown opposite. Tony kindly sent in a number of scans of Leslie Wood's work, a few of which we also reproduce here including, on the following two pages, Tony's favourite: Henry the VIII's warship the "Great Harry".

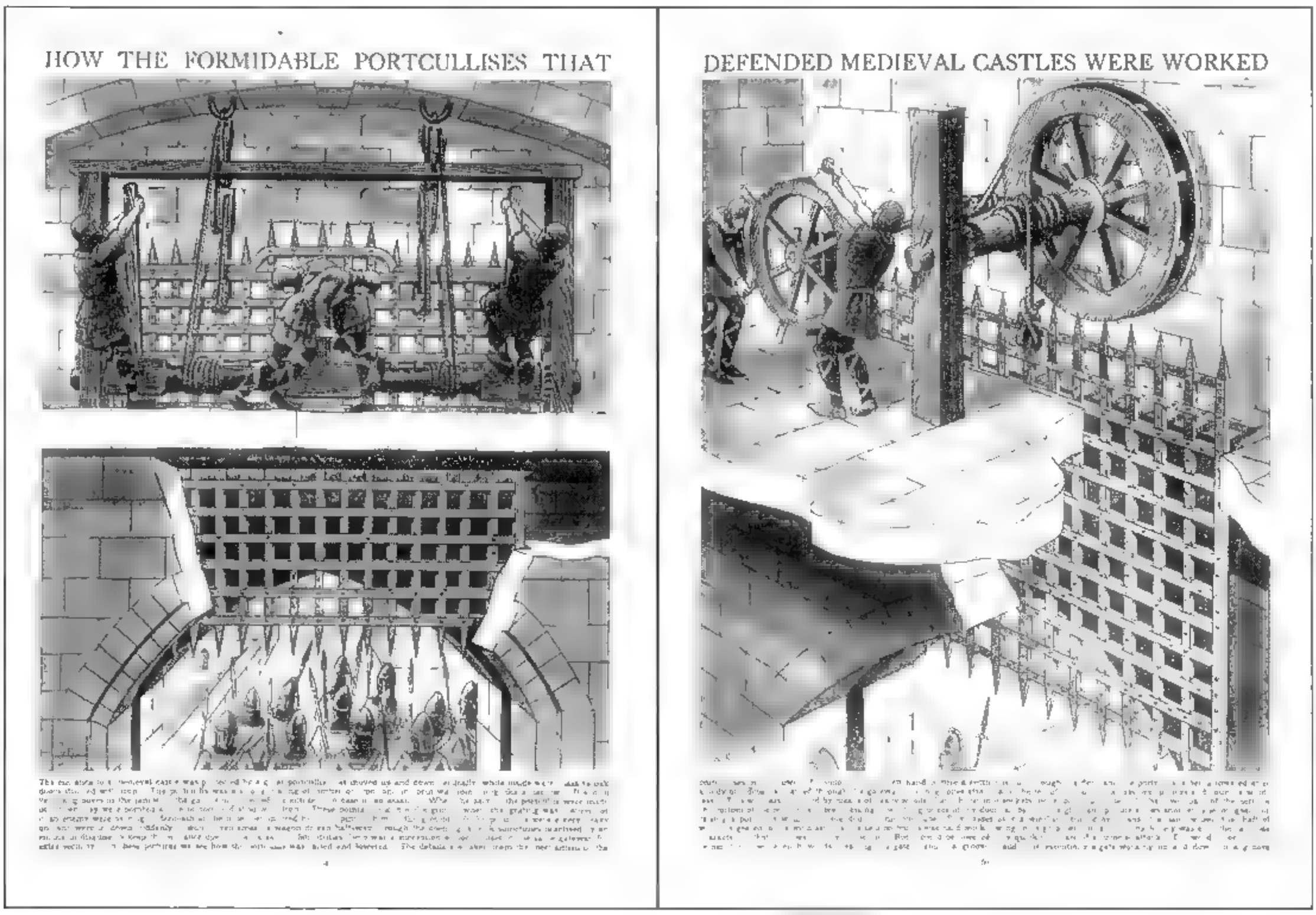
After a little research I find that *The Romance of the Nation* was first published as a part-work by Amalgamated Press in 1931, in 50 weekly parts (priced at 6d each), and later in book form. There seem to be at least two bound versions, the first (?) Amalgamated Press edition being in two separate volumes/books, and a later (?) Educational Book Co. Ltd. edition, in four "volumes" (though published as two books).

The World of Wonder (*10,000 Things Every Child Should Know*) also first appeared in magazine format, in 52 weekly parts published by Amalgamated Press, beginning in November, 1932. Readers could buy a self-binder for the sum of 6/- (plus 6d postage), or could wait to get the parts professionally bound. On completion of the 52 parts being published, a Rexine binding case could be purchased for 6s 3d, and Amalgamated Press also offered to do the binding for a further 6s 6d.

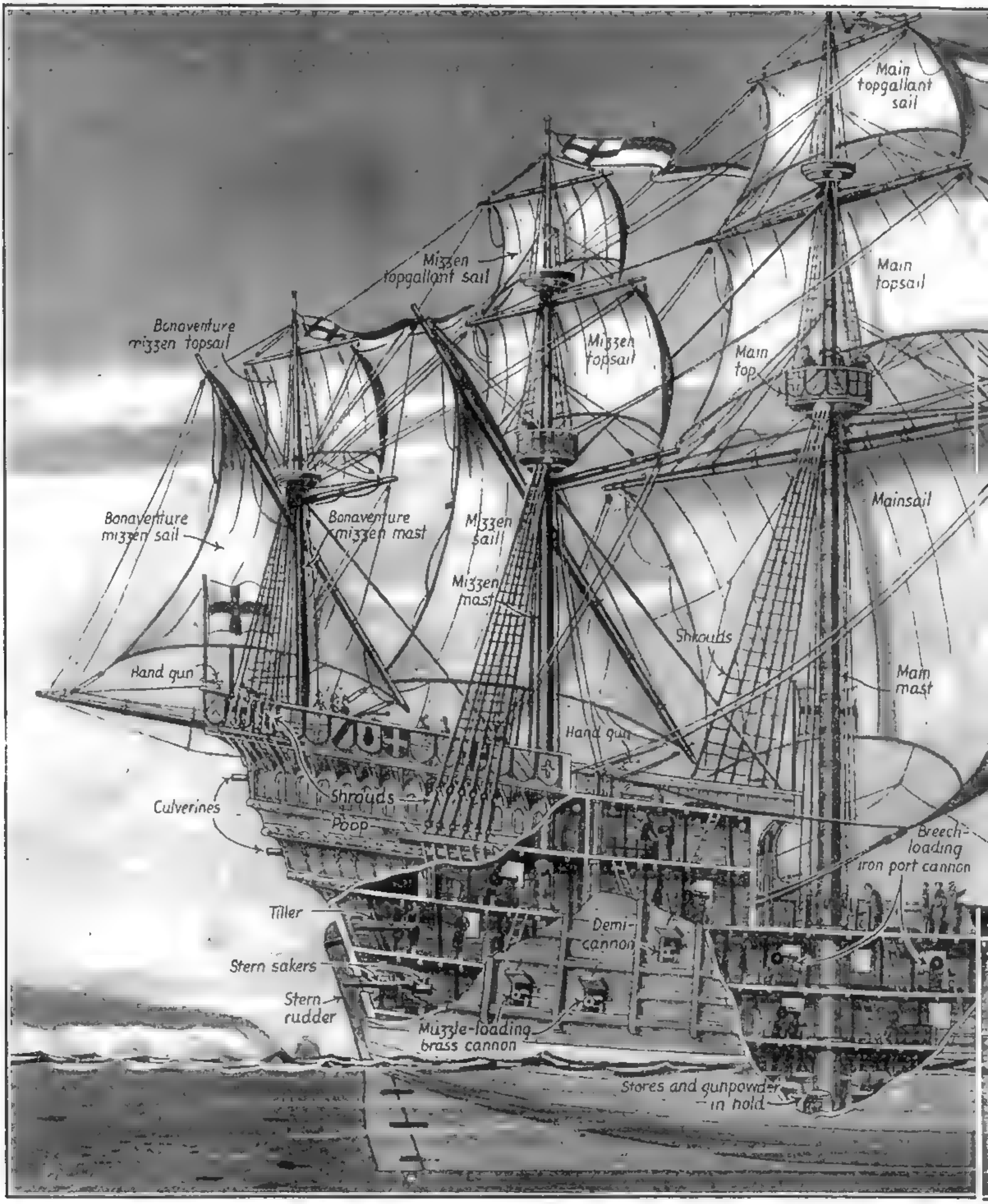
A "New Series" of *The World of Wonder* followed in 1933, in 20 weekly parts, dropping the first series' sub-title. The volume that Tony has would seem to be the later series, in book form, and is sub-titled *Marvels of Science Made Plain to All*.



Incidentally, a later Amalgamated Press part-work series edited by Charles Ray was *Everybody's Enquire Within*, published in 1938. *Every Boy's Book of Knowledge*, published by Prion in 2007, reprints a selection of articles *Everybody's Enquire Within*, including three illustrations clearly signed "L. Wood" or "L.W.". One of these is a double page pull-out colour spread: 'How Does That Locomotive Work? The L.M.S. "Coronation" and the Train it Draws'. L. Ashwell Wood would return to the same subject, The Coronation Scot, over twenty years later, with a new drawing for the 12th December, 1959 issue of *EAGLE*. ❑



THE "GREAT HARRY," THE FAMOUS ENGLISH



The "Great Harry," or "Harry Grace à Dieu," was the most famous English warship of early Tudor times, and was a great advance on any previous British warship. It was built at Erith, and was probably launched in June, 1514. Its tonnage is not definitely known, but was certainly 1000 tons or more. When King Henry the Eighth left Dover for the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520 he embarked on this fine ship. The vessel carried an armament of 186 guns, four being cannon, which threw a shot weighing sixty pounds. The smallest fixed guns were known as falcons, and the shots they fired weighed only two pounds each. A hundred of the weapons were merely hand-guns. The vessel, as can be seen, had a very lofty poop and forecastle. It carried top-gallant sails on the fore, main and mizzen masts Sometimes the "Great Harry" is spoken of as a five-masted ship, one of the masts being the one inclined forward like a modern bowsprit. Each mast was made in one piece, the introduction of separate top-masts coming at a much later date. Though the "Great Harry" was the largest English ship, there were still larger

WARSHIP LAUNCHED BY KING HENRY VIII

essels in the Mediterranean. Some of the carracks of the trading republics of Italy and Portugal were as much as 1600 tons. Progress in shipbuilding was less rapid up to the end of the fifteenth century than it became later, when more than a century of discovery had opened up new trade routes and the need for sea-going ships that could ride the fiercest storms became urgent The introduction of the three-masted ship marked an epoch in the progress of shipbuilding, and the building of the "Great Harry," with its four masts and a sprit mast, carried shipbuilding a stage farther than it had yet reached. In the early days of firearms cannon were first placed on the deck of the aftercastle of a ship, the guns projecting over the vessel's side, but later, when the weapons became heavier, the larger ones were often mounted on deck in the waist of the ship. As the size of the guns increased this arrangement was not satisfactory, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century cannon were mounted on the lower deck, their muzzles projecting through portholes in the hull The "Great Harry" was rebuilt in 1540, the number of her guns being then reduced to 122

CLASSICS *Illustrated* and The West

by
Alan Candlish

Being a western buff, I am enjoying the 'Rivals of Jeff Arnold' series in the *Eagle Times*. I particularly enjoyed the articles on Buffalo Bill and Kit Carson. Cowhand Horn mentioned the various comic strips in which they appeared in the 1950s. These, it must be said, were fiction, merely using the names of these western heroes as the focal points of the stories.

However, there was a series of comics which (more or less) gave factual biographies of the two heroes. Their life stories were related in the *Classics Illustrated* series of comics that were popular at the time. As the title suggests, these mainly gave strip-cartoon adaptations of literary classics, starting off with *The Three Musketeers* and followed by *Ivanhoe*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Moby Dick*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and so on.

The original intention may have been to focus on the literary classics but the series soon expanded to include historical events and biographies of real-life characters. Among the latter were a number of western heroes such as Daniel Boone (Issue 96), Buffalo Bill (106), Kit Carson (112), Wild Bill Hickok (121) and Davy Crockett (129). There were also other real-life characters from that era such as Benjamin Franklin (65) and Abraham Lincoln (142).

In addition there were a number of other western stories that were non-biographical. The James Fenimore Cooper tales of the early American pioneer days were often featured. *The Last of the Mohicans* has already been mentioned but other Cooper Leatherstocking works were also included – *The Deerslayer* (Issue 17), *The Pathfinder* (22), *The Pioneers* (37) and *The Prairie* (58).

As the subject matter suggests, *Classics Illustrated* originated in the USA. It was created by Albert Kantor and first saw the light of day in 1941 under the title of *Classic Comics*. This was to change to *Classics Illustrated* in 1947 and was to

last until 1971, during which time some 169 titles were issued.

A British series of the comic was introduced and, although it largely followed the American one, there are some differences. A total of 162 titles were issued in the UK but some 13 of these never appeared in America. The James Bond story *Doctor No* was one, although it was based on the film rather than Ian Fleming's original book.

There were a few variations in the cover art between the American and British versions. Most of the covers were excellent and have now become collectors' items but, in my view, the internal art often left quite a bit to be desired. Some were good, a few very good, but many were mediocre. Certainly none of the western stories reached anywhere near the standard of Frank Humphris or Harry Bishop.

In Britain there were a number of series within the run of *Classics Illustrated* and this was reflected in the price. At the time when the basic series

was in print it cost 1s 0d (48 pages in full colour), there were also the *Popular Classics* at 1s 3d (also 48 pages in full colour), *Super Classics* (1s 6d – 48 pages in full colour with art board cover), *Giant Classics* (2s 0d - 4 pages in full colour, art board cover) and finally a hardcover *De Luxe Classic Library Edition* (2s 6d). Interestingly the last group included issues from the basic (1s 0d) series. *Buffalo Bill* was one of these.

Although the original *Classics Illustrated* series finished in 1971, there were only a couple of new releases after 1962, by which time some 200 million copies had been sold world wide. Today, copies of the original comic in near mint condition can sell in the States for thousands of dollars.

The series was resurrected (albeit briefly) in 1990 with new adaptations and new artwork. Later more successful attempts were made to re-issue some of the original titles along with new adaptations in America and Canada.

A new British series, published by Classic Comic Store, began in 2008 and is still on-going, although the issue number sequence is different from the originals. The covers were digitally cleaned up and enhanced and were based on the original American covers. To date only one of the original western subjects has been issued in this revised run – *The Last of the Mohicans* (released in September 2011). This is Issue No. 34, compared to the original Issue No. 4. In fact all the new issues have different numbers compared to the original series. All the artwork in this issue has been re-coloured.

A few other western *Classics Illustrated* titles are also available through Classic Comic Store. These include *Custer's Last Stand*, *Roger's Rangers* and *Geronimo, The Apache Leader*. But these were not part of the original American or British *Classics Illustrated* run. They are translations of titles that were produced in Europe in a non-English language and are significantly dearer to buy. ❑

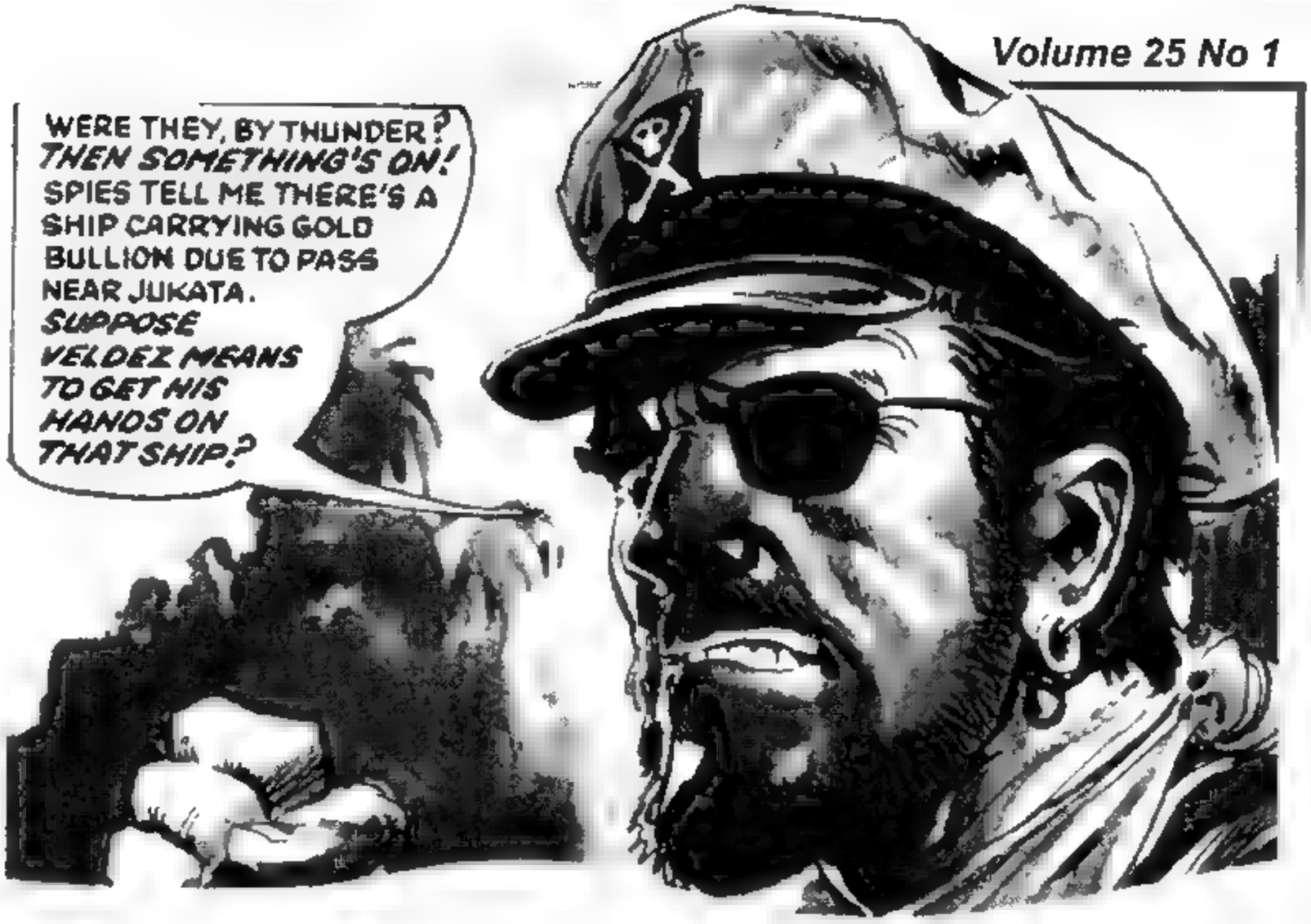
Sky Buccaneers

Steve Winders examines Edward Cowan's futuristic pirate strip from the sixties

'Sky Buccaneers' began in *EAGLE* Vol. 19 No. 17 dated 27th April 1968. Drawn by José Ortiz and written by Edward Cowan, it replaced *Grant C.I.D.* the final title of the *Smokeman* stories that were also the work of Ortiz and Cowan. The new strip was about a group of contemporary "pirates" who operated from a huge submarine containing two "jet lift VTOL aircraft" housed on a deck with a retractable roof, which obviously closed when the submarine submerged. Although early VTOL (Vertical Takeoff and Landing) planes were being developed at this time the two featured in 'Sky Buccaneers' do not resemble them. They were actually described as "Buccaneers", which were real low-level strike aircraft manufactured by Blackburn Aircraft and later Hawker Siddeley and used by the Royal Navy and R.A.F. The Buccaneer first flew in 1958 and came into service around 1962. However, although their high tailplanes and nosecones resemble those of the Buccaneer, the planes in the strip differ in several ways, principally in the fact that real Buccaneers were not VTOL. The real Buccaneers

The opening frame

It was the morning of June 14th. Aboard the luxury cruiser 'Manhattan' bored millionaires and their wives stared languidly at the Caribbean's blue waters. But suddenly their boredom vanished — for the blue waters churned white. . .
ELMER, WHATEVER IS IT? HOW EXCITING!
QUICK, GET YOUR CINE CAMERA!
PERHAPS IT'S SOME MONSTER FROM THE DEEP!

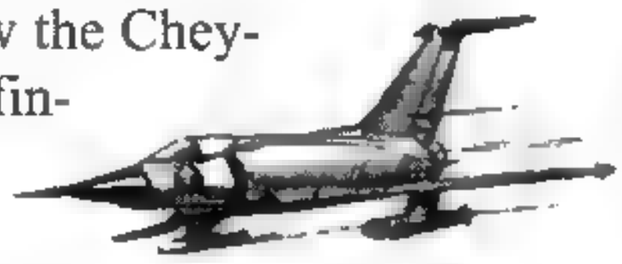

WERE THEY, BY THUNDER? THEN SOMETHING'S ON! SPIES TELL ME THERE'S A SHIP CARRYING GOLD BULLION DUE TO PASS NEAR JUKATA. SUPPOSE VELDEZ MEANS TO GET HIS HANDS ON THAT SHIP?

Blackbeard

were also two-seater planes whereas the ones in the strip were single-seaters. The aircraft in the strip also looked sleeker than their real-life counterparts, mainly because of their smaller engines, and they clearly combine aspects of a range of different fighter jets to create visually appealing planes.

The pirates themselves looked like a bunch of cutthroats. Wearing costumes that were a cross between popular notions of historical pirate gear from the eighteenth century and more contemporary sailing wear they carried cutlasses as well as guns. Several wore bandannas and some wore earrings. Their leader, known only as "Blackbeard", wore a modern style naval cap, but with a skull and crossbones badge on the front. He also wore a red and white hooped jersey. His black beard, broken nose and eye patch provided him with a menacing appearance. The rest of the crew represented a host of nations, with some resembling pirates of the China seas and others those of the Caribbean. Despite their unsavoury appearance the Sky Buccaneers were actually on the side of justice. They used the *Shark* submarine to fight against an international gang of gun runners, led by the sinister Veldez, who was trying to foment "world wide revolution".

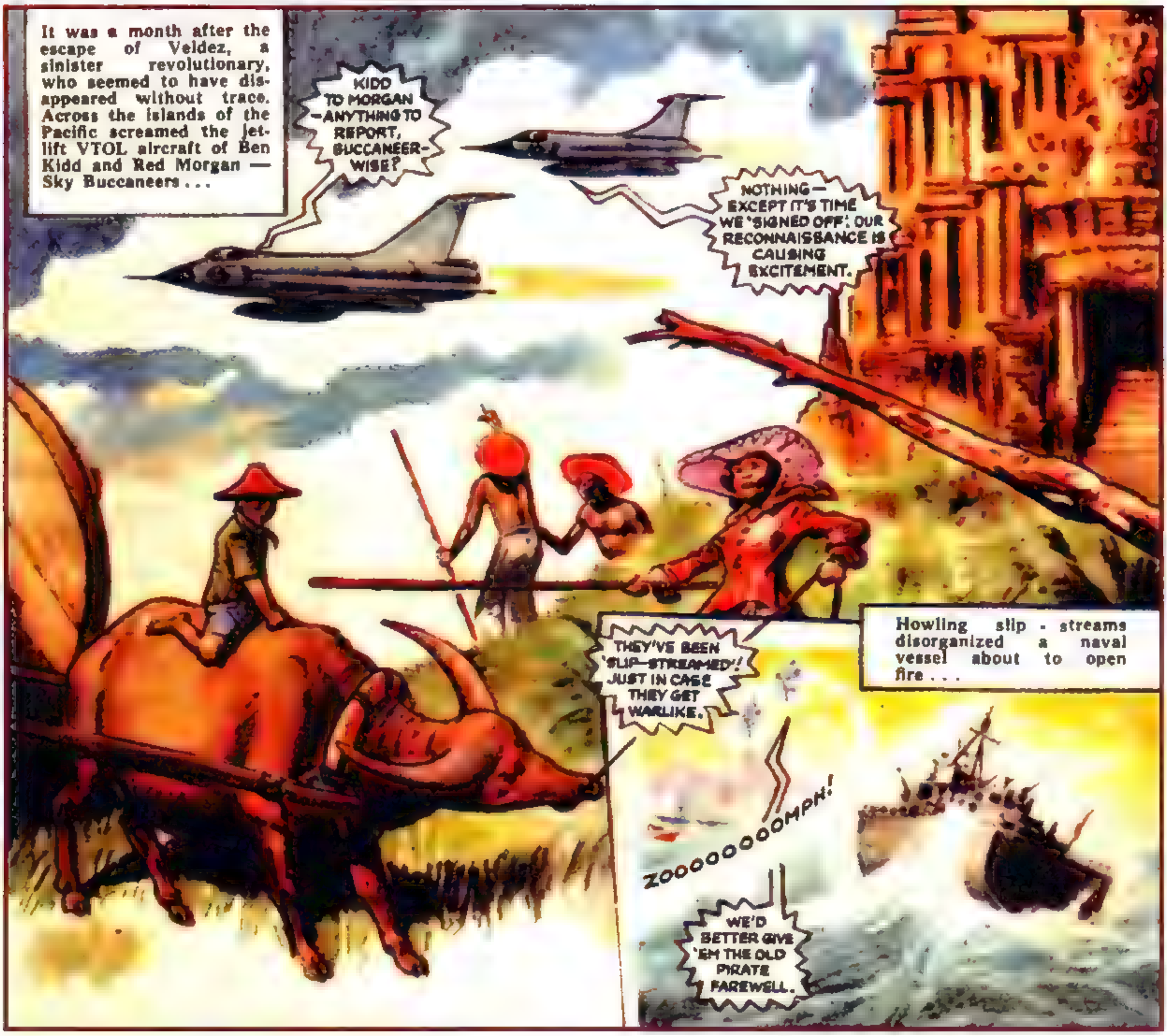
The actual heroes of the strip were the pilots Red Morgan and Ben Kidd. Morgan was presumably red haired, although we never saw his hair on the colour pages and Ben Kidd was dark. In black and white Morgan's hair was gently shaded around the edges and left predominantly unshaded to easily distinguish him from Kidd. Actually Edward Cowan had already used the name "Red Morgan" for a villain in his 'Blackbow the Cheyenne' strip in a story which had only finished the week before 'Sky Buccaneers' began! Apart from the villain Veldez the strip had only one other named, regular character. This was "Jules", one of the pirates, who is sometimes seen at Blackbeard's side. However there were several other recognisable background characters in the crew.



The first three episodes of the strip appeared on the front and second pages of *EAGLE*, making it only the third strip to occupy the colour front cover, after 'Dan Dare' and 'Smokeman'. By this time *EAGLE's* second page was black and white. However after the third instalment the strip was moved to two inside pages in black and white as most of *EAGLE's* strips now took turns on the front cover. 'Sky Buccaneers' would occupy the cover on three more occasions during its run. The move to inside pages does not indicate a lack of popularity of the strip at this time because the original three weeks it spent on the cover would not have given the editors enough time to gauge readers' opinions of it.

The most obvious inspiration for 'Sky Buccaneers' was Jules Verne's classic novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, published in 1870, about a huge futuristic submarine, the *Nautilus*, which attacks ships carrying armaments. Written at a time when the only real submarines were one-

Morgan and Kidd in action


It was a month after the escape of Veldez, a sinister revolutionary, who seemed to have disappeared without trace. Across the islands of the Pacific screamed the jet-lift VTOL aircraft of Ben Kidd and Red Morgan — Sky Buccaneers . . .
KIDD TO MORGAN —ANYTHING TO REPORT, BUCCANEER-WISE?
NOTHING — EXCEPT IT'S TIME WE 'SIGNED OFF'. OUR RECONNAISSANCE IS CAUSING EXCITEMENT.
THEY'VE BEEN 'SLIP-STREAMED'! JUST IN CASE THEY GET WARLIKE.
Howling slip - streams disorganized a naval vessel about to open fire . . .
ZOOOOOOOOMPH!
WE'D BETTER GIVE 'EM THE OLD PIRATE FAREWELL.

man-operated craft with extremely limited capabilities, the *Nautilus* could not be pursued by the authorities. The *Shark* is also a huge futuristic submarine and difficult to pursue. Its crew are fighting against gun runners and Blackbeard is as obsessive in his hatred of Veldez as the enigmatic Captain Nemo of the *Nautilus* is against "the purveyors of war". 'Sky Buccaneers' acknowledges its debt to *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in the name of the character "Jules".

Other significant influences were the science fiction television programmes of Gerry Anderson, notably his puppet series *Stingray*, about a small but advanced future submarine, and its successor *Thunderbirds*, about an organisation who rescue people from disasters all over the world using a fleet of sophisticated vehicles, including a submarine and advanced aircraft. These programmes formed the basis of *TV Century 21*, one of *EAGLE's* biggest rival comics in the mid and late sixties, which apart from its threat to *EAGLE's* sales also secured the services of several of *EAGLE's* best artists. A lesser influence may have been the American TV series *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea*, about a futuristic submarine *Seaview*, which ran from 1964 to 1968 and was based on the 1961 film of the same name. The observation windows on the bow of the *Shark* submarine slightly resemble those on the *Seaview*.

However, with its flight deck the *Shark* is unique and consequently its design is unique, although it echoes the basic shape of contemporary nuclear submarines.

Aside from the futuristic submarine and planes, the other key element of 'Sky Buccaneers' was the pirates. There is no obvious single source of inspiration here. Old classic novels such as *Treasure Island, The Sea Hawk* and *Captain Blood* romanticised piracy for many generations and *EAGLE*

often featured pirates in its half-page fiction strips or text articles. During the run of 'Sky Buccaneers', 'The Guinea Pig', another strip in *EAGLE,* featured a story where the hero goes back in time and assumes the identity of an eighteenth-century pirate and actually meets the "real" Blackbeard in the story. The inclusion of anachronistic pirates echoing the dress and speech of the eighteenth century yet operating a submarine and jet aircraft was the strip's own innovation.

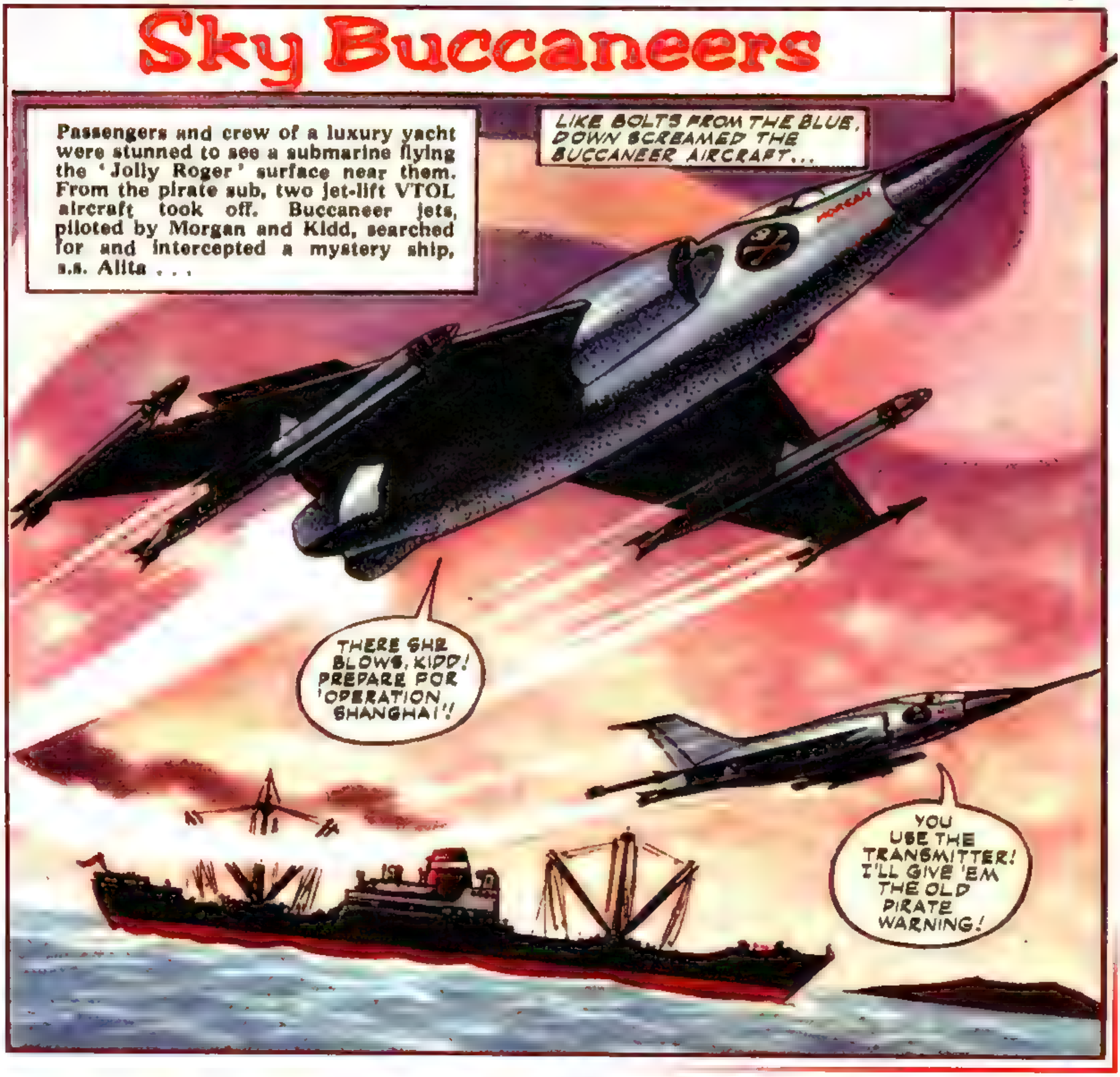
'Sky Buccaneers' ran for just twenty episodes in *EAGLE*, divided into two ten-part stories. The first story introduces the *Shark* and the Sky Buccaneers, although no background information is ever given about where the pirates come from or who has created or financed the *Shark* and the aircraft.

In this story the Buccaneers lead an American aircraft carrier to a ship full of illegal arms and then track the gunrunners to their island base and destroy it, using weapons that incapacitate but don't kill, including a powder which clogs up guns, and sleeping gas. At the end of the story, Veldez, the leader of the gunrunners, escapes and vows revenge.

The second story is about how Veldez uses a huge amphibious craft shaped like a crab, which can travel underwater and on land to steal a shipment of gold and to seize the *Shark.*

Both the gold and the *Shark* are rescued by Morgan and Kidd, who destroy the "Crab" machine. A final six-page story appears in the *Eagle Annual* for 1970. In this story the Buccaneers, again chasing gunrunners, encounter a ghost eight-

The Sky buccaneers scream into action


Sky Buccaneers
Passengers and crew of a luxury yacht were stunned to see a submarine flying the 'Jolly Roger' surface near them. From the pirate sub, two jet-lift VTOL aircraft took off. Buccaneer jets, piloted by Morgan and Kidd, searched for and intercepted a mystery ship, s.s. Alita . . .
LIKE BOLTS FROM THE BLUE, DOWN SCREAMED THE BUCCANEER AIRCRAFT...
MORGAN
THERE SHE BLOWS, KIDD! PREPARE FOR 'OPERATION SHANGHAI'!
YOU USE THE TRANSMITTER! I'LL GIVE 'EM THE OLD PIRATE WARNING!

The Buccaneers returned to the submarine 'Shark'...
STEADY AS YOU GO, MORGAN! YOU CRASH THAT KITE AND I'LL KEEL-HAUL YOU!
SKIPPER! YOUR TEMPER DOESN'T IMPROVE!

The Buccaneers return to the 'Shark'

eenth-century sailing ship with a skeleton at the wheel. The "ghost" ship turns out to be a collapsible dummy attached to the top of a submarine which submerges when the submarine goes deeper under water. The Buccaneers fire a special torpedo which sticks to the side of the ship and contains a homing device that leads them to the villains' island base. Once again Veldez is in charge of the enemy and the pirates attack and destroy the base.

The short duration of 'Sky Buccaneers' indicates that it was not so well received by readers. While it is an all-action strip, much of the action involves machines and there is too little interplay between characters. The characters do not engage the readers. Although the buccaneers dress colourfully they have no distinctive personalities apart from Blackbeard, who never develops beyond the loud ill- tempered caricature presented in the first instalment. Morgan and Kidd are talented pilots who show initiative and an irreverent attitude to their leader, but no more can be said about them and their personalities are identical. The villain Veldez is only shown in occasional individual frames, usually ranting about the buccaneers to no one in particular. A feature of the sixties *EAGLE* was its poor presentation of characters, although Edward Cowan was generally the best of the writers at conveying personalities and relationships, especially in his humorous 'Cornelius Dimworthy' and 'Mickey Merlin' strips. However 'Sky Buccaneers' is particularly weak in this regard.

An emphasis on futuristic vehicles does not necessarily mean that characterisation will suffer. The Gerry Anderson TV programmes which were an inspiration for 'Sky Buccaneers' featured many interesting and engaging characters. With a better focus on characterisation 'Sky Buccaneers' could have been a great success, for the basic idea, like many in the sixties *EAGLE,* was a good one. It is interesting to speculate how a previous *EAGLE* writer like Alan Stranks or later *2000 A.D.* and "new" *Eagle* writers John Wagner and Alan Grant would have handled the strip. Certainly they would have given the pirates distinctive personalities.

While it often enhances a story to include an element of mystery, 'Sky Buccaneers' has too many unanswered questions. Who has financed the vastly expensive *Shark* submarine and its aircraft and where and how were they constructed? Who is "Blackbeard" really? Presumably his name derives from his beard, but is he really an eccentric millionaire and the financier of the venture? Are "Morgan" and "Kidd" the pilots' real names? Do they coincidentally have the surnames of famous pirates or have they merely adopted them?

More information about the backgrounds and motives of the characters might have better engaged the interest of the readers.

An inconsistent feature of the strip is the way that the buccaneers use gas and a clogging powder to incapacitate their enemies without killing them, but then attack them in hand-to-hand combat using cutlasses and other lethal hand weapons. The use of the gas and powder suggests that they want to avoid killing their opponents, which is quite in keeping with the moral attitudes promoted by *EAGLE* and other comics in the sixties. However the hand-to-hand battles that follow suggest that possibly the buccaneers clog the villains' weapons so that they can kill them with cold steel later! While the strip shows the ensuing fights, no one is ever shown stabbing or killing an opponent in any other way and the pirates take a lot of prisoners, so it could be concluded that they are able to use their deadly weapons to successfully capture their enemies. Perhaps they use the flat of their cutlasses to knock them unconscious!

The hand of Edward Cowan as writer is recognisable from the first page of the first episode, thanks to the peculiar turn of phrase he uses in his dialogue. He avoids using conjunctions, preferring short sentences and phrases which convey meaning economically in a speech balloon, but are quite unnatural. In the first instalment a passenger on the cruise ship says "Pirates? It's quite laughable," to which another passenger comments "The Captain

– Blackbeard! I don't laugh." Quite apart from the question of how this passenger knows that the pirate leader is called Blackbeard, his statement is grammatically odd. "The Captain's Blackbeard, so I'm not laughing!" would be a more likely comment. Other examples of Cowan's curious language in dialogue are "It's dust: Dust that clogs up the guns," which would read better as "It's dust and it's clogged up our guns," and "Nets! We're enmeshed," which would be far more realistic as "We're trapped in this net!"

Cowan also shows great enthusiasm for metaphors as revealed in captions like "The naval jets screamed for their prey", "The aircraft clawed skywards" and "Howling slip-streams disorganised a naval vessel," and these undoubtedly enhance the storytelling.

'Sky Buccaneers' gave the artist José Ortiz a better opportunity to work to his strengths than in the last part of the 'U.F.O. Agent'/'Smokeman'/ 'Grant C.I.D.' saga which finished the week before the 'Sky Buccaneers' began. 'Grant C.I.D.' was set in a provincial English town, which Ortiz as a Spanish artist was unfamiliar with and it showed. His earlier work on 'U.F.O. Agent' and 'Smokeman', in which the action took place all over the world, was much more confident and now 'Sky Buccaneers' again provided the opportunity for drawing exotic locations, as the stories were set in the Caribbean and the Pacific. 'Sky Buccaneers' also provided Ortiz with some opportunities for colour work, which had been such a successful feature of 'Smokeman' before the strip was relegated to black and white as 'Grant C.I.D.' Unfortunately the 'Buccaneers' only appeared in colour on six pages and while Ortiz maintained the high standards he had achieved on 'Smokeman', *EAGLE* now had a new printer and was produced on inferior paper, so the reproduction quality was not as good. After 'Sky Buccaneers' Ortiz would principally work in black and white. He drew horror stories for the American Warren Comics before working on 'The Tower King', 'The House of Daemon' and 'The Thirteenth Floor' for the 1980s (new) *Eagle*. In these strips he created many grotesque characters and his imaginative interpretations of the pirates in 'Sky Buccaneers' was an excellent preparation for this later work.

'Sky Buccaneers' ended five weeks after the start of *EAGLE's* eight-page *Soccer Special* which included the two-page 'Circus Wanderers' strip. As no strips had finished immediately before the start of the Soccer section, *EAGLE* was carrying an additional story to its usual quota and consequently its running costs rose. While this was considered acceptable for a few weeks following the well publicised introduction of the *Soccer Special*, which was a bid to attract new readers, it could not be maintained indefinitely, especially as *EAGLE* was struggling with steadily declining sales and indeed would be merged into *Lion* just eight months later. Something had to go, and 'Sky Buccaneers' was the obvious candidate. It was not an established popular strip and it had not captured the imagination of readers in the way that 'U.F.O. Agent' and 'Smokeman' had. The final episode of 'Sky Buccaneers' appeared in Vol. 19 No. 36 in the issue dated 7th September, 1968 and was its only single-page instalment. It was an interesting idea which, like several stories in the sixties *EAGLE*, could have been much better. It is remembered principally as a good example of the work of José Ortiz and apart from the strip for the 1970 annual was actually his last work on the original *EAGLE*.❑

Author's note: I am grateful to Will Grenham and Adrian Perkins for providing information for my article.

FLAK LASHED A REPLY...
ALL GUNS BEARING RED — RAPID AND INDEPENDENT FIRE! COMMENCE! COMMENCE!
EVASIVE ACTION! THIS PROVES WE FOUND THE RIGHT SHIP.

THE AIRCRAFT CLAWED SKYWARDS...
WONDERFUL — WE'VE A FIGHT ON OUR HANDS! WATCH HOW THIS KIDD PUTS THOSE GUNS OUT OF ACTION. DON'T GET SHOT UP, MORGAN.

Ms. Dare?

Eagle Society member Steve Winders sent in this "transgender" Dan Dare, which he found on a website called localhero.org.uk. Perhaps she is Dan's daughter, Danielle?

Notes by the artist inform us that the model is Sofia Vergara, and that he considered the green jumpsuit she was wearing ideal for his concept. He adds "Although it may be a bit lost in the shadow, the first thing I did was giver her Dan's distinctive eyebrow. I recoloured her eyes. Next I created the metallic buckle, and recoloured the zipper to match. The raygun is an actual Dan Dare Raygun that you could buy, shadowed to blend in. The hat was added, and recoloured by hand to match the jumpsuit. Additional shadowing [was] added. The IPS insignia used throughout the picture was downloaded from the web and used at various sizes and various level of drop shadow and blur. The large one was also embossed to give it a more 3D look. The watch is a '70s attempt at a watch/voice recorder, rotated and shrunk to fit, with shadows added. Finally [I] added the framed Dan Dare pic in the corner for reference. The pic and the IPS text make it seem like a lobby or waiting room. Enjoy."

Astute readers will realise that the abbreviation for Interplanetary Space Fleet should be ISF, but perhaps the artist had reason to be distracted!

Front cover: Adapted from Art by José Ortiz ('Sky Buccaneers', *EAGLE*, Vol. 19 No. 31, 3rd August, 1968)
Rear cover: 'Danielle Dare' - Bill at localhero.org.uk
***Eagle Times* design/DTP layout: Will Grenham**

attend Air-Sea Rescue excercises with this launch in the English Channel.

To find out more about Ashwell Wood we really need to contact *EAGLE* reader P.D. Rose, whose father swept the chimney of the Cutaway Maestro in 1953! (See *EAGLE* 10th April 1953, page 11.) Doubtless Mr. Rose would have many insights into the lifestyle of Ashwell Wood and the state of his chimney.

Sorry about the errors but, as you know, "there is many a cup 'twixt lip and slip".

Regards

DAVID GOULD (East Grinstead)

ET: *A whole crockery set, David.*

To 'The Team',

It must be seen as a great compliment that I am having to order an additional *Eagle Times* binder for 2012 – 2015. I recall that when the matter of producing binders was first discussed at an *Eagle Society* Weekend Dinner, some doubts were expressed about the need to have them go as far as 2011. Here we are, January 2012 and the 25th volume is about to begin and the 26th Annual Event will be held in Southport.

It has not been without its ups and downs and the future survival of the magazine looked tenuous at times, but on each occasion it pulled through.

This is a major achievement and sets quite a record. I am sure the whole membership of the *Eagle Society* will join me in thanking all the individual members of 'The Team', past and present, and especially Howard who has chaired it since the beginning. Their dedication, persistence and creativity has produced a magazine that throughout its existence has, via a range of fascinating articles, brought as much pleasure as the original *EAGLE* it is dedicated to. Through the magazine have come some stimulating debates and the occasional controversy. But it has also introduced me to a variety of interesting people, many of whom have become long-standing and close friends.

Thank you for all that hard work and I for one look forward to enjoying many more years of *Eagle Times*.

Yours, most sincerely,

DAVID BRITTON (Potters Bar)

ET: *Thanks for your letter, David. But we wouldn't have lasted if it hadn't been for our loyal membership, so it's thanks to you, too.*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

I was very impressed with the translation of my draft of 'Dan Dare Figures' into the finished product in the Winter 2011 issue of *Eagle Times*. I have had some articles mangled in the past but this time there was some very intelligent juxtapositioning and labelling of the photos.

Absolutely brilliant!

If it was Will Grenham's work please pass on my thanks and congratulations to him!

Best Wishes

TED HERBERT (Leighton Buzzard)

ET: *Glad you liked it, Ted. We do try to present articles as best we can when members have taken time and trouble over them. It was Will's work and we are very lucky to have a man of Will's talents on the Team.* ❑

AN EAGLE WORDSEARCH

compiled by David Gould

Cross through the words, which may read in any direction, as you find them; the remaining unused letters spell out the name of a respected colouring artist.

J	L	O	D	I	M	U	N
O	A	T	S	U	G	U	A
Y	E	N	R	A	B	P	C
E	K	R	O	Y	D	P	I
L	N	P	E	N	O	I	R
R	O	N	A	L	D	T	E
A	O	R	R	T	E	Y	M
H	G	R	E	I	N	N	A

1.- Home of "La Rutha".
2. Professor Hector --------
3. Artist's surname is also habitation name in Yorkshire and Shropshire.
4. Villain who gave his life for Jack.
5. Rufas ----- naval intelligence.
6. Jeff was once described as "that ------ galoot from Texas".
7. Nationality of "Honest Abe".
8. Pet name for Dan's ship.
9. The month in which the Boys and Girls Exhibition was usually held.
10. Mr. Syme, author of 'The Secret Mine'.
11. Probyn's silent character.

Solution to previous Eagle Wordsearch (*ET* Vol. 24 No. 4): merry-go-round